

Direct and Indirect Methods:

Manipulations of Feminine Conventions in Heian Period *Nikki* (794-1185)

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Introduction

The Heian period (794-1185) was a period of cultural flourishing for the aristocratic few in Japan at the time. During this period the Chinese learning that had been pursued by the Japanese aristocrats during the Nara period (710-794) found expression in the structure of cities, the writing of poetry, and clothing styles as what would be later recognized as “native Japanese style.” In *The Cambridge History of Japan*, Helen Craig McCullough explains, “The Japanese repudiated earlier efforts to make their court a mirror image of the one at Ch'ang-an, and moved instead toward the amalgamation of foreign and native elements into a civilization distinctively their own” (Shively and McCullough 390). In the Heian period, the primary form of communication was through the exchange of poetry styled after Chinese poetry, and part of one's value as a lover was determined by one's calligraphic skill. Dressing themselves in layer upon layer of silk, damask, and brocade, and carrying painted fans made of delicate paper inscribed with poetry, Heian period fashion was the epitome of lavishness. Through the recording of historical fact in Chinese by men, we can understand the politics of the aristocratic system. Cultural awareness, however, is not just garnered through facts about a time or place; it is an understanding of the thoughts and actions of the people. How is one to understand the thoughts of a people from one-thousand years ago, you might ask yourself. Through hand-made copies of women's writings that were passed throughout court for entertainment, one can gain insight into ways in which the aristocracy think and represent themselves during the Heian period. While many men were busy copying Chinese histories, and documenting events at court, women were writing *nikki*, or “diary-style narratives,” in grass hand, a native phonetic syllabary that was mainly used by women. The difference between men's records and women's records is clear.

While men documented the events in their daily lives as recorded history, women wrote about their lives in a more literary fashion. Women's *nikki* tell the story of the protagonist's life through narrative voice in order to express a particular point to the reader. While men's works mostly recorded events as dated history, women's works contain the protagonist's thoughts, the narrator's opinion, and often have a point that is trying to be expressed to the reader.

Through the analysis of these writings, I intend to examine how aristocratic women in the Heian period viewed femininity, and how through various means they portrayed and subverted conventional ideas of femininity in their *nikki* (diary-style narrative). In her work, *Fictions of Femininity*, Edith Sarra likens the actions of the female author of *Kagero nikki* as an antithesis to the then dominant form of communication, *waka* poetry. She states, “because unlike *waka*, it [the author's actions] is too direct, too unrhetoical . . . To make such an open show of resentment is to test the limits of the feminine” (Sarra 37). The rhetorical is something that is covered over through flowery words. It is the opposite of the overt, and the direct. Sarra's analysis of Michitsuna no haha's actions in that particular context portray how overt actions could skirt the boundaries of what was considered feminine by society. Through the analysis of three *nikki* from the Heian period, I will show that women use directness in order to portray or subvert common ideas of femininity.

In this analysis I will assemble portrayals of ways in which women present their feminine personae through three works. In *Reading Autobiography*, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson propose that the autobiographical self is based upon “models of identity” that are “culturally available to the narrator at her particular historical moment” (168). They also discuss the difference between author, the character the author portrays, and the narrating and “narrated I”

(Smith and Watson 167). Taking these valuable cues, I will analyze the persona that each woman portrays in her text, and will attempt to outline the models of feminine identity with which these autobiographical subjects identify or critique. The works investigated in this study are *Kagero nikki* (954-974) or, *The Kagero Diary*, translated by Sonja Arntzen (1997); *Makura no soshi* (early 11th century), referred to as *The Pillow Book by Sei Shonagon* and translated by Meredith McKinney (2006); and *Murasaki Shikibu nikki* (1008-1009) also known as *Murasaki Shikibu: Her Diary and Poetic Memoirs*, translated by Richard Bowring (1982).

Literary Genres

Kagero nikki and *Murasaki Shikibu nikki* are traditionally categorized as examples of the *nikki* genre. *Nikki* is a word that has often been rendered into the English language as “diary.” However, to equate *nikki* to something like a diary would be a mistake. The *Cambridge Dictionary* defines a diary as, “a person's private record of events, thoughts, feelings, etc., that are written down every day, or a book where such things are recorded” (Diary). The definition of *nikki* is much broader than that. *Nikki* can comprise one's personal thoughts, imperially commissioned accounts of historical events, or a critical analysis of society and those within the given society. It was not necessarily written for the author's benefit only, as one would expect of a Western-style diary. In fact, two out of the three works we will be examining were written by women at court, and their works were imperially commissioned to be read by other people. Furthermore, all three works contain sections addressing the reader, thus disposing any idea that these works are private diaries.

Makura no soshi on the other hand, falls under the *zuihitsu*, or miscellany category. *Zuihitsu* is often translated as a “following of the brush” and contains random jottings, including

impressions that the author gains from her surroundings and the events she witnesses. A *zuihitsu* does not necessarily contain whole sentences or thoughts, sometimes expanding to include random lists and short fictive narratives. If it falls under a different literary category, why include *Makura no soshi* in this analysis of *nikki*, one might ask. While *Makura no soshi* does contain passages of a style different from that of the *nikki* genre, its inclusion of diary-style passages allows for its incorporation in the analysis of *nikki* works. *Makura no soshi* can thus be likened to works of the *nikki* genre.

Secondary Scholarship on Heian Women's *Nikki*

This study on Heian period works written by women has been informed in its approach by previous scholarship on both Japanese Heian period cultural history and on Heian period women's autobiography.

Important works on Heian period culture and literature include *The World of the Shining Prince: Court Life in Ancient Japan* by Ivan Morris (1964), “Japanese Marriage Institutions” by William McCullough (1964), “*Sei Shonagon's Makura no soshi*: A Re-visionary History” (1997) and “Chinese Learning as Performative Power in *Makura no soshi* and *Murasaki Shikibu nikki*” (2001) by Naomi Fukumori, *The Cambridge History of Japan, Heian Period* (1999), *Fictions of Femininity* by Edith Sarra (1999), *The Father Daughter Plot* (2001), *Women and Confucian Cultures in Premodern China, Korea, and Japan* by Dorothy Ko, JaHyun Kim Haboush, and Joan Piggott (2003), *At the House of Gathered Leaves* by Joshua Mostow (2004), and *Objects of Discourse* by John Wallace (2005).

These important scholarships helped shape the topics that we will be discussing in this work. Ivan Morris and William McCullough's works give an initial introductory background

into the field of Heian period studies, which is updated and expounded by *The Cambridge History of Japan*. These works contain general understandings of court life, dress, politics, relationships, religion, and pass-times of the people during this period. Edith Sarra's *Fictions of Femininity* contains chapters on several Heian period works. Sarra's chapter on *Makura no soshi* discusses seeing and being seen from male and female perspectives. The effects of looking and being looked at are of considerable importance when taking into account direct and indirect feminine actions. Sarra's chapter on *Kagero nikki* problematizes writing from a woman's perspective, and the restraints the author, Michitsuna no haha, faced in her marriage. While Michitsuna no haha did in fact face constraints as a woman, I will focus here on the power Michitsuna no haha, as protagonist, actually did have within her marriage, and how she uses conventions of femininity in order to manipulate her husband. Sarra also describes the directness and unrhetoricity that Michitsuna no haha employs in her work. I will portray how our understanding of Heian aristocratic women's actions within *nikki* are shaped by this idea of the direct and the indirect. *The Father Daughter Plot* is a compilation by various authors discussing the relationships between women and their fathers in Japanese works, and helps shape our understanding of the reliance on others that women during this period faced. This is especially evident in *Kagero nikki* in which the author is a woman who is entirely reliant upon her father, husband, and son. When her father leaves the capital, she is forced to compete against other women in order to keep her husband's attentions. Ko, Haboush, and Piggott's work portrays female roles in marriage, and comments on women's use of Chinese characters. A work central to understanding the use of Chinese by Heian period aristocratic women is Naomi Fukumori's work on Chinese learning. Within her article she explains that the use of Chinese

was not forbidden to women, but its correct use could in fact strengthen one's social standing. In this text I will further exemplify how women's *flaunting* of their Chinese knowledge, due to the direct nature of such an act, rather than the actual *having* of the knowledge itself, is what made other aristocrats look down upon women's Chinese studies. Fukumori's scholarship on *Makura no soshi* also portrays ways in which the author depicts her own version of history by concealing key political issues of the time, and she also discusses the use of the term *okashi* or “amusing” as a vital rhetoric in the re-visioning of history in the text. She additionally describes how the author ridicules those who do not fit in at court. As I will discuss later, Sei Shonagon's actions parallel those of Murasaki Shikibu in her *nikki*. John Wallace's *Objects of Discourse* contains chapters on both *Kagero nikki* and *Murasaki Shikibu nikki*. His chapter on *Kagero nikki* discusses how the author's change in housing, and portrayal of bodily states reflects the precariousness of her marriage. Discussing how marital precariousness is due to one's ability, or lack thereof, to produce children, we will see how the importance of children in this society allows for one to use them as a way to manipulate one's spouse. Wallace's chapter on *Murasaki Shikibu nikki* focuses on the recording of gift givings, and portrayals of beauty within the text. Furthermore, he poses the idea of Murasaki Shikibu considering herself an outsider. This idea of insiders and outsiders helps to shape the idea of direct action through its use by those considered to be “outsiders.”

Background on The Heian Period

In order to obtain a better understanding of the authors and texts we will be discussing, it is pertinent to first discuss Japanese court society's standards for women and relationships, as well as historical context and religion. In order to understand women better, we need to first

understand the situations they were placed in by society and by their relationships.

Historical Perspectives and Lineage

Within the aristocratic worlds inscribed in *Kagero nikki*, *Makura no soshi*, and *Murasaki Shikibu nikki*, it is imperative to know the people's political and family background. Starting with the historically earliest work, *Kagero nikki*, and moving on to the latest work, *Murasaki Shikibu nikki*, I will explain how various aristocrats relate to each other.

The most important family in the aristocracy of the Heian Period was the Fujiwara family. The Fujiwara family was able to obtain power through the marriage of daughters into the imperial line. When a male of the family became regent due to a relative becoming an imperial consort, he would manipulate the current Emperor into resigning. Because of this forced early resignation, the next Emperor in line to rule would be too young to make decisions. Thus, he would be but an actionless figurehead. Since the new Emperor was too young, rulings would defer to the regent. Ivan Morris explains, “the family found it useful for emperors to come to the throne while they were still children and thus entirely malleable. This allowed them to institute the office of regent which . . . offered them a particularly direct and effective means of political control” (Morris 50). In this manner, Fujiwara family members would act as puppet master of the emperor in order to rule Japan. When the current emperor became old enough to rule, the Fujiwara clan would once again force his resignation through manipulative techniques and induct a new underage emperor, who would also take a Fujiwara daughter as consort. The emperor would thusly be controlled from the background.

The first people the reader comes across in *Kagero nikki* are of the Fujiwara clan. The

author, Michitsuna no haha (936-95?), was the daughter of a provincial governor by the name of Fujiwara no Tomoyasu. Her *nikki* focuses on her marriage to the high-ranking man, Fujiwara no Kaneie (929-990), and the son they had together, Michitsuna. Kaneie had nine known wives and lovers, and several of his children grew up to attain considerable rank themselves. Three of his children of the utmost importance were Fujiwara no Michitaka (953-995), Fujiwara no Michinaga (996-1027), and Fujiwara no Senshi (962-1102). Both Michinaga and Michitaka became regents to the emperor, and Senshi became an imperial consort to Emperor En'yu (959-991). Fujiwara no Senshi gave birth to a boy who later became Emperor Ichijo. Michitaka had a daughter, Empress Teishi (977-1000), who later became consort to Emperor Ichijo (980-1011). She was also the empress under whom Sei Shonagon, the author of *Makura no soshi*, was employed. Michinaga also had a daughter, Empress Shoshi (988-1074), who became a second consort to Emperor Ichijo. She was the empress under whom Murasaki Shikibu was employed. When Empress Teishi lost political backing in 993, Empress Shoshi's court came into favor. The birth of Ichijo and Shoshi's son, Prince Atsuhira (999-1049), is an occasion of major importance in *Murasaki Shikibu nikki*.

Religion

Religion during the Heian period was based upon a blending of two traditions: Buddhism and Shinto, the fusion of which served to establish the first native Japanese Buddhist sects. At the basis of Buddhist teachings is the belief that life is suffering and that one can obtain *nirvana*, freedom from suffering, through an extinction of the “self” by detaching oneself from worldly things. Shinto, on the other hand, is an indigenous, animistic religion based upon *kami*, which, while commonly translated to mean “god” is better explained by Thomas Kasulis in his book

Shinto: The Way Home as something that contains a “vital power,” and that can be “natural or humanly made, whether associated with joy or fear, whether a site, a personage, or an event” (Kasulis 11). While *kami* began as things one views with awe, the Heian period's fusion of Shinto and Buddhism adapted the traditional meaning of *kami*. Through *honji suijaku* (original nature, provisional manifestation), specific *kami* were equated to specific Buddhas and Bodhisatvas, and the translation of *kami* as “god” became more of a reality.

What is important culturally is an understanding of things that were considered pure or impure from a religious standpoint. Things considered inauspicious included childbirth, menstruation, death, and illness. During these times a person was not allowed to enter temples or shrines, and was not allowed into the imperial palace grounds for fear of defiling the Emperor and those in his household. Things that could purify included fire, water, salt, and *sake*, and to this day many shrines have water at their entrance available for the washing of one's hands and mouth.

The aristocratic people also followed superstitions of the yin yang tradition. This tradition focused on avoiding certain deities when these deities were residing in certain areas. For example, the earth god lived in a different area depending on the time of the year, such as the garden or the well, and creating changes to whichever area he was living in would anger him. Thus, such actions were to be avoided. Moreover, certain dates held taboos for specific directions, and during these times being within that direction boded ill. This was again because certain gods were traveling through those directions, and one was to avoid disturbing them by traveling in the same direction. In *The Cambridge History of Japan*, Alan Grapard states, “This involved moving for one day in a direction other than planned, spending the night there, and

reaching one's intended destination the following day. As time passed, aristocrats transformed these cumbersome practices into a kind of game that involved plans to spend a night at the home of some relative or acquaintance in order to be entertained” (Shively and McCullough 553). Furthermore, this could affect a husband's visits to his wife, were she on occasion living in a taboo direction. Additionally, a wife being in a taboo direction conveniently allowed for a husband to excuse himself from visiting her that evening in order to visit another wife.

It was common in the Heian Period for men and women to take religious pilgrimages. These pilgrimages were not only a way for people to express and experience their spirituality, but they also provided escapism. These observances allowed men to escape from their everyday work at court, and allowed women to escape from their homes and their seclusion behind folding screens. It afforded them a chance to see life outside of the capital, and to feel connected with nature. As will be seen in *Kagero nikki*, pilgrimages could also be used as a form of coercion in order to gain a lover's attention.

Women in Courtship and Marriage

Courtship was traditionally conducted through management by intermediaries and without a man's actual sighting of the woman being courted. A man was expected to make first contact through gaining the confidence of a woman's attendant, or through her parents. He would not be able to directly see the woman, however, as she would be shrouded behind folding screens and blinds for privacy. He would instead initiate communication by composing poetry, and their relationship would continue in the fashion of correspondence through *waka* poetry, the 31-syllable poetic form, for a period of time. It was expected of a woman to act in a diffident manner at the beginning of the couple's correspondence. In this way, she would not project the

image of being an “easy” woman.¹ After the woman becomes amenable to his advances, her parents would turn a blind eye and the man would come to spend the night. Spending three nights together would signify that the couple's marriage was official. After the third night, the parents would accept him as her husband, and would bring rice cakes to them in the morning.

Even after marriage, the wife would remain within her mother's home, and her husband would visit for nightly trysts. However, many men would move into the home of his principal wife. A high-ranking man was expected to take several wives and lovers, and doing so was not considered improper. On the contrary, for an aristocratic man to only have one wife was considered unusual. Ivan Morris explains that having multiple wives “was an envious status symbol— an indication of wealth, skill, charm, and health . . . the man who had only one or two wives. . . would be regarded as not only abnormal but also anti-social” (Morris 237). However, this created considerable competition amongst his many wives. In order to become a principal wife one would need to be of the highest rank of the wives, and/or would need to produce the most children.

Due to this polygynous system, a literary theme of the *matsu onna* (the waiting woman) developed. The *matsu onna* is the woman whose life revolves around the expectation of her husband's visits, left with nothing but to wait for his return. Edith Sarra in *Fictions of Femininity* states, “The *matsu onna* (the woman who waits) was already a stock figure in Heian *waka* in the mid-tenth century, and as one of the most potent fictions about feminine behavior and destiny, this figure continued to linger in the tradition long after the Heian period ended”

1 In her article, *The Value of Vulnerability*, Margaret Childs poses that women's vulnerability at this time made it so that women had to do very little in order to give a man easy access. Furthermore, she describes the courting game as one in which the woman turns down the man's advances only to make him push harder.

(Sarra 30). We will see within *Kagero nikki*, *Makura no soshi*, and *Murasaki Shikibu nikki*, however, that not all women played the role of *matsu onna*, and that women used techniques of manipulation in order to ensure their husband's return.

Other literary themes developed likewise through women's courtship traditions. Often in the literature of this period, a man's ability to see a woman would signify the consummation of their relationship, because women were kept so strictly confined within their homes. Unless a man was of very low rank so as to be considered inconsequential, or of high enough rank (that of the Emperor) that such limitations were not imposed, a proper woman was expected to remain hidden. Such efforts by families to protect the mystery of their daughters understandably created heightened interest in the voyeuristic violation of women. It is not surprising perhaps that fictional narratives of romance abound in peeping Tom scenes where a man unexpectedly catches sight of a woman from behind a fence. Such a scene is called *kaimami* or, literally, “peeping through the fence.” *Kaimami* usually signifies the beginning of a relationship, or at least the beginning of a man's obsession over a woman. When a man actually comes behind a woman's blinds, the Heian narrative signals that he has taken her as a lover.

The importance of poetry in the courtship tradition and the stereotypical *matsu onna* image of females contributed to the development of several themes in the poetry sent between husband and wife. The translator of *Kagero nikki*, Sonja Arntzen writes, “the tone of expression in love poetry is almost exclusively that of yearning or lamentation” (Arntzen 6). Poetry composed between lovers often consisted of sadness that they cannot always be together, and yearning for the next night on which they will meet. Composing poetry of longing and poetry of resentment for the man who does not come to visit every night was actually commonly practiced

by women. Sarra discusses a special poetry contest that occurred under the reign of Emperor Horikawa (reigned 1087–1107) in which “teams were divided up according to gender. On the second day of the month the men's team presented the women's with poems proposing love (*kesho no uta*), to which the women composed replies. On the seventh day the women initiated the exchange with poems of resentment (*urami no uta*), to which the men replied.” (Sarra 198). In this situation, we see women practicing expressions of resentment. It can only be determined that such expressions were expected out of a woman in order to show her longing and the loneliness that she feels while her husband is away with other wives. This is an especially important factor to understand when reading *Kagero nikki*, as Michitsuna no haha's focus throughout a large portion of the text is on waiting for her husband's return.

Children were of considerable importance within marriage politics. A woman who produced many children had the potential to become a principal wife, and thus would be able to garner more attention from her husband. From the husband's point of view as well, having many children was important. Having a male child allowed one to increase his rank through his child's court appointments. However, it took a long time to make any considerable increase in rank through one's male children. Through the birth of female children, on the other hand, a man could rapidly jump up in rank. If the child is desirable enough, she could be courted by someone of high rank, or even become an imperial consort, in which case her father's status would dramatically increase.

What one would consider desirable in an aristocratic woman was based on several factors. Women were expected to be trained in calligraphy and instruments, have a vast knowledge of Japanese poetry, and be talented in sewing and embroidery. Ivan Morris states in

The World of the Shining Prince, “Calligraphy, music and poetry— these were the main components of a woman's education; and together they provided a good basis for the type of cultural life she was expected to lead” (Morris 209). They were also expected to be able to use this poetry in an appropriate manner at the appropriate time, including reference to season. Additionally they had to know how to properly match the various colored layers of their outfits, and their hair was expected to be thick and of floor length or longer. In many cases, especially when older, women would wear a sort of wig to augment their thinning hair. A woman who was able to meet the expectations of beauty and who was trained in poetic expression, calligraphy, and instruments would be considered desirable, and would have a higher chance of garnering the attentions of a high ranking man. Furthermore, a woman was expected to sew clothing for her husband. In *Kagero nikki*, Michitsuna no haha is relied upon by her husband to sew his clothing. Since he is a high-ranking aristocrat, he often needs new clothes for court events and in order to remain fashionable. Though he has many wives, Michitsuna no haha is the most skilled at sewing and embroidery, so he always sends cloth to her to be sewn. She writes, for instance, “At the end of the month, work was delivered again . . . It was material for an underrobe . . . I kept it, did a not uncaredful job on it, and, on the first of the month sent it with the young lord” (Arntzen 329). Through saying “work was delivered again,” and the many examples of Kaneie sending Michitsuna no haha cloth to be sewn, we know that sewing was a duty that was expected of her.²

2 In her work, *Text and Textile: Unweaving the Female Subject in Heian Writing*, Carole Cavanaugh situates Heian period women's roles through the creation of textiles.

Language

A final factor of importance was the bilingualism of the aristocratic people. While Chinese was mainly used by men for their studies and in composing historical records, it is apparent that women also had knowledge of Chinese poetry. In the introduction to *Women and Confucian Cultures in Premodern China, Korea, and Japan*, Ko, Haboush, and Piggott discuss how the political system in Japan slowly changed from female rulers to male rulers. They argue that because of this change, “It is no coincidence that in the Heian period women generally ceased writing kanji, the Chinese script that signified erudition and political power” (Ko, Haboush, and Piggott 17). As Ko, Haboush, and Piggott claim, knowledge of Chinese could serve to show one's intelligence, and its use by women might allow them to converse on par with men. For example Sei Shonagon's use of Chinese makes others look favorably upon Empress Teishi's salon, and Murasaki Shikibu's use of Chinese was discreet and yet used to help teach the powerful Empress Shoshi. In this way, the use of such knowledge bestows upon Sei Shonagon and Murasaki Shikibu a distinction of intelligence beyond conventional female knowledge. Piggot, Ko, and Haboush's statement that “it is no coincidence” that women stopped openly using Chinese refers to the flaunting of knowledge. While having a base knowledge of Chinese allowed a woman to increase her social status, the exhibition of such knowledge showed one to be insensitive and a braggart. When discussing *Murasaki Shikibu nikki*, Naomi Fukumori writes, “The relationships, including those with her father, the emperor, Fujiwara Michinaga, and Empress Shoshi, are strengthened specifically through Murasaki's *zae*” (Fukumori 110). *Zae* is one's knowledge and use of Chinese. This quotation shows how Murasaki Shikibu, through her knowledge of Chinese, is able to become employed at court under Empress Shoshi, thus showing how a woman's knowledge of Chinese, when used appropriately, indicated intelligence and

served to increase her status.

As can be seen from this overview of the times, Heian period aristocratic society had clearly established codes of decorum that shaped women's experiences. Within the three diary-style narratives of the Heian period that will be discussed in this thesis, that is, *Kagero nikki*, *Makura no soshi*, and *Murasaki Shikibu nikki*, women use “direct” or “unrhetorical” ways as well as indirect manners to shape societal expectations and thereby fulfill their ambitions.

Disenchanted Tales:

Kagero nikki

Kagero nikki by Michitsuna no haha (literally Michitsuna's mother) was written in order to relay the truth of marital relationships among the aristocracy during the Heian period. Many fictional romantic works were written during this time, and Michitsuna no haha is trying to depict just that— that these works *are* fiction. Her three-part *nikki* relates the marriage of a woman of the provincial governor class with a man of the powerful Fujiwara clan, Fujiwara no Kaneie. She depicts a tale of hopeful reliance, disappointment, and manipulation. The narrative follows her life from around age nineteen until her late thirties. This time period only contains the portion of her life during her marriage, the implication being that her life before and after marriage was not of importance to her purpose as a writer of a *nikki*. One thing to note when looking at *Kagero nikki* is that Michitsuna no haha is not a woman who served at court. While many women writers had court activities and duties to distract them and friends at court to rely upon, Michitsuna's mother is solely reliant upon her parents, husband, and son. A short way into Book One, Michitsuna no haha's father leaves for an appointment in a distant province, and further into the narrative, her mother passes away. Later on we will delve into how these losses

shape her actions in the *nikki*. Additionally, *Kagero nikki* is not an imperially commissioned work as *Makura no soshi* and *Murasaki Shikibu nikki* (in part) are. Thus, the author's concerns did not include impressing the reader or commissioner, as is the case with some *nikki*.

Kagero nikki is broken up into three chapters. Book One begins around the year 954, and covers fourteen years, spanning the largest period of time of the three sections. The introductory address to the reader begins in the third person, as if the author is telling a fictional tale. Once beginning her actual reminiscences however, Michitsuna no haha switches into a first person narrative. Book Two encompasses the next three years of her life, portrays the author's increasing discontent with her marriage, and contains what is considered the climax of the *nikki*, her trip to Hannyā Temple. It has been suggested that the author began composing *Kagero nikki* during the events of this portion of the book. Book Three also contains events covering three years of the author's life. This final portion of the *nikki* varies from the first two sections in that it focuses on the lives of her son, Michitsuna, and her adopted daughter.

There are two full translations of *Kagero nikki*. The first of these translations, *The Gossamer Years*, translated by Edward Seidensticker in 1973, depicts Michitsuna no haha as a helpless woman whose failing marriage drives her to suicidal thoughts. In this manner, his translation depicts the author and the protagonist as a similar persona. In his book *Objects of Discourse: Memoirs by Women of Heian Japan*, John R. Wallace makes a statement in relation to the Seidensticker translation, “Seidensticker is hardly alone in measuring the text by Western values and literary expectations. No doubt vexing for some is the protagonist's relentless rhythm of acrimonious complaint while submitting passively to the very situation about which she complains” (Wallace 55). As Wallace states, Seidensticker's translation portrays the author as

entirely helpless in her marital situation. This Western viewpoint highly distorts Michitsuna no haha as a character, and consequently Sonja Arntzen's 1997 translation, *The Kagero Diary*, is the version of the text being analyzed here.

Before we dive into our examination of *Kagero nikki* itself, we must discuss the author's reliability, in order to completely understand the actions of Michitsuna no haha and Fujiwara no Kaneie. Since this is a diary-style narrative, it must be taken into account that the author puts forth her own opinions on a situation. She introduces her work by explaining her motivation for writing in the first paragraph— a warning sign to the reader that her views may be skewed because of her purpose. As a reader we have to be able to see past these opinions and get a larger picture of the situation as a whole from the viewpoint of all characters involved in order to truly comprehend their interactions. As previously stated Michitsuna no haha is not a woman at court. This in itself means that she does not have the responsibilities that occupied many other women's time (attending court events such as archery contests, attending to the Empress, etc). Because of this Michitsuna no haha's life is completely reliant upon close family members, her husband, and her son. Carolyn Heilbrun explains in *A Woman's Life that* a woman's life can be entirely led by her marriage. She describes it as “the marriage plot that demands not only that a woman marry but that the marriage and its progeny be her life's absolute and only center” (Heilbrun 51). This is an exact depiction of the state of the author in *Kagero nikki*. When her father leaves the capital due to his post as provincial governor and her mother passes away, Michitsuna no haha is left with just her husband, Kaneie, and her son, Michitsuna, to rely upon. Unfortunately, Michitsuna's mother is not Kaneie's principal wife, and during the time of their marriage, Kaneie takes several other wives and lovers. While not all of Kaneie's lovers are

mentioned in *Kagero nikki*, historical record has shown that in his lifetime, Kaneie had a total of nine wives or lovers (Wallace 62). Knowing all this information is extremely important in how we construe the information that we absorb. Michitsuna no haha's introduction helps explain her motivation for writing her *nikki*. She writes:

It is just that in the course of living, lying down, getting up, dawn to dusk, when she looks at the odds and ends of the old tales— of which there are so many, they are just so much fantasy— that she thinks perhaps if she were to make a record of a life like her own, being really nobody, it might actually be novel, and could even serve to answer, should anyone ask, what is it like, the life of a woman married to a highly placed man (Arntzen 57).

Since we have a narrator who wishes to disillusion readers from tales (*monogatari*) of romance by showing the realities of married life, we know that she herself had fictional expectations when going into her marriage. She even states herself that her relationship with Kaneie would be considered normal when viewed by an outsider, writing, “So far as the world at large is concerned, there is nothing unsuitable about us as a couple; it's just that his heart is not as I would have it; it is not only me who is being neglected, I hear he has stopped visiting the place that he has been familiar with for years” (Arntzen 73). The protagonist's reliance upon Kaneie, and her desire to have him only for herself lies behind all of her actions. Additionally, for her to hear that Kaneie has ceased his visits to Tokihime, Kaneie's principal wife and Michitsuna no haha's biggest rival for his affections, bodes ill for the future of her relationship. It shows how fierce the competition between lovers can be, and how quickly one wife can be ignored if a new wife is chosen. Michitsuna no haha is a woman who is completely reliant upon her husband's affections, has a viewpoint towards relationships that is skewed by lies of romance, and must compete against other women to maintain the interest of her husband. With this understanding of her situation, one can analyze the protagonist's reactions without this analysis being skewed

by the narrator's stated opinion.

Kagero nikki serves to disenchant young female readers with the story of a true relationship. Many women during the Heian period passed time by reading fictional romantic works; however, Michitsuna no haha's life has led her to believe that these tales are deceptive. She writes to prove how misleading these tales can be when one is faced with the reality of marriage. The *nikki* begins by recounting how disappointed she was when her future husband did not act in the manner one would expect of the hero of a tale. When proposing marriage, Kaneie acts jokingly and discusses it with her father beforehand, betraying the sense of secrecy a woman would expect from the first three nights of visitation. Michitsuna no haha is appalled. She wishes he had acted in accordance with the way a “secret” affair would begin— by approaching one of her attendants without her father's knowledge.

Poetry being the main form of communication between people made it extremely important in male-female relationships. Since a woman could not just be seen in person and courted, a man would have to pass poetry back and forth to a woman in order to communicate with her. Because of this, having elegant handwriting was an extremely important factor in judging the value of a person and a lover. In this manner, as well, Kaneie does not live up to these expectations: “I had heard from of old that in such a case the hand would be perfect, but the writing in this is so bad that I feel it couldn't be that sort of letter; it is so very strange” (Arntzen 57). Michitsuna no haha states that the letter does not have any romantic feeling because Kaneie's handwriting is so poor. She is once again references the tales “of old” and how the reality does not live up to the expectation.

Most of her disappointment in her relationship stems from the fact that she must “share”

her husband with other wives. Since she is of the same rank as Kaneie's principal wife, Tokihime, the only major difference between them is Tokihime's ability to produce many children. As she is able to produce five children for Kaneie, she remains in the position of principal wife. Michitsuna no haha writes, "Despite my having consorted with this most fortunate man for months and years, I am still without a lot of children, and thus, my position is uncertain and these worries are the only things of which I have a surplus" (Arntzen 113). Michitsuna no haha's inability to produce children in addition to Michitsuna, keeps her forever in Tokihime's shadow and causes her to agonize over her place in Kaneie's affections. Being unable to bear many children in order to help Kaneie climb the social ladder at court, her value as a lover was never able to reach principal wife status. Wallace states, "From page one, the protagonist's situation is intensely competitive. She is never free from worries about her tentative place in the social order" (Wallace 97). She thus disenchants the reader by showing that since a man's affections are largely reliant upon his wife's status and her ability to have children, a woman who cannot produce many children must do everything within her power to keep her husband's affections. We see this exemplified by the Machi Alley Woman, who was openly criticized by the author for being an illegitimate child, unrecognized by her princely father. After stealing favor over both Tokihime and Michitsuna no haha, the Machi Alley Woman quickly loses her influence: "That 'splendid' personage of Machi Alley lost favor; in the midst of my feelings of hatred, I had wished to see her live long enough to suffer just as I had; now not only had that come to pass, but to top it all off, was not the child that had been the occasion of all that annoying clatter dead?" (Arntzen 87). Michitsuna no haha portrays her jealousy towards the Machi Alley Woman, and her relief that she no longer has a reason to be

jealous. After the death of her child, the Machi Alley Woman quickly falls out of Kaneie's good esteem. Though Kaneie continues his infrequent visits with Michitsuna no haha, he begins regularly visiting Tokihime once again. It can only be expected that he would return to Tokihime as she is able to produce multiple children for him, whereas Michitsuna no haha has only been able to produce a single child. Wallace concludes that, "Tokihime, the only woman senior to her, was so well established that it was not realistic to hope that Kaneie would neglect her" (Wallace 61). Since three of Tokihime's sons, Michitaka, Michikane, and Michinaga, grew up to become Regents, and two of her daughters, Senshi and Choshi, grew up to become imperial consorts, Tokihime was vital in Kaneie's court ambitions. Having these highly ranked children served to increase Kaneie's status. Michitsuna no haha's hopelessness in becoming Kaneie's principal wife is apparent, and this factor is key in disenchanting the reader with her struggle to maintain Kaneie's interest.

Another way in which the author tries to disillusion the reader is through the story of one of her son's romances. Towards the end of the *nikki*, there is a large inclusion of poetry that has been sent from Michitsuna to a woman whom he was trying to court, the Yamato Woman. Translator Sonja Arntzen states, "The other interesting issue involved with Michitsuna's love poems is that the only poems from those suits that were ultimately unsuccessful are recorded. We know from other historical records that around this same time Michitsuna had formed a liaison with a woman who bore him a child a year later, but that affair is not mentioned at all in the diary" (Arntzen 304). Keeping in mind the author's initial purpose, that is, writing to disenchant women from the old tales with her true tales of romance, it is interesting to note that Michitsuna's romance that is recorded in the *nikki* is one that begins just like an old tale. He is

captivated by a woman whom he spots at a festival. When he tries to run after her carriage, he is unable to catch her, and later proceeds to correspond with her through poetry in hopes of starting a relationship with her. The author's purpose being to prove that the old tales are fictitious, it is no wonder that she would include a real tale of her own that starts out like the ones of old but ends unconventionally. One poem he sends to the Yamato woman exclaims, “As fruitlessly as I/ have gazed at you from afar/ the years have gone by/ my sleeves have been steeped in/ the color of these blossoms” (Arntzen 319). The Yamato Woman responds, “As the years go by/ why do you without good sense/ and to no avail/ stand around amid blossoms/ to become stained by their hue?” (Arntzen 319). Michitsuna tries to charm her by saying that he truly loves her, and the proof of his love is in his willingness to wait. The Yamato Woman refutes his argument, saying that it is without “good sense” and that he waits without “avail” for her to ever come around to him. The author includes a relationship such as this for the reader to see that relationships that resemble romantic tales are not possible. Even in the case where a relationship seems to start in a promisingly romantic fashion, it will never work out. This is perhaps one of the reasons Michitsuna no haha includes Michitsuna's failed relationship rather than one that actually came to fruition. While she may have helped to write the poetry for this particular relationship, and thus decided to include it, one then wonders why she didn't leave this relationship out of the text completely. She skips over months and even years at a time in her *nikki*, so why choose to include one of her sons failed relationships? It can only be concluded that she is trying to prove her point that the tales are false, and consequently disillusion the reader from such thoughts of romance.

Contentions for Favor

Michitsuna no haha's efforts to win Kaneie's favor provide much of the narrative interest in this *nikki*. Women during the Heian period are often portrayed as having had no control or power within their relationship. Ivan Morris proclaims, “*Gossamer Diary*, for example, is one long wail of jealousy by a woman in whom the emotion has attained hysterical proportions . . . and that social convention prevents her from expressing in any more direct manner” (Morris 244). Conversely we will see that while using a direct manner did not always coincide with societal convention, Michitsuna no haha's actions as protagonist do consist of direct methods of manipulation and these methods do work in gaining the attention of her husband. The protagonist's use of these manners of coercion suggests to the reader that she did have a degree of control within her marital relationship. Despite Michitsuna no haha being able to garner his attention, Kaneie doesn't take her bids for power seriously and acts as if she is playing a game. I agree with John Wallace's assessment that “his [Kaneie's] answer is the usual joking response that prevents any real communication between them” (Wallace 94). Since both Kaneie and Michitsuna no haha make attempts at manipulation, we can see that they were, in reality, on equal footing in the relationship, though Kaneie may not have seen it that way. Through *Kagero nikki* and Michitsuna no haha's manipulations, which appear blatant to the reader, we can see that the stereotypical “woman who waits” (*matsu onna*) without a way to influence her husband's return, was not always an accurate portrait of a Heian aristocratic woman. Whenever the protagonist realizes she is beginning to lose favor with her husband, we can recognize the struggle that she goes through in order to maintain the esteem of one of the few people she has left to rely on.

While we see the protagonist act out against Kaneie in order to prove her feelings of

jealousy and loneliness, she draws him into her game of manipulations and employs several drastic methods to once again become a top contender for his affections. First, we see the usage of religion to threaten the closure of their relationship. Despite religious pilgrimages seemingly threatening to tear their relationship apart, they conversely play a large part in holding their relationship together. Second, she employs her children to manipulate him. While most of her actions can be considered indirect manipulations, through the marked switch to direct manipulations, her pilgrimage to Hannya marks the reality of her fear that their relationship is over. As we will see, not only are these moves effective in regaining his interest, they also serve to pull Kaneie into “playing games” as well, thus proving that he still feels an attachment to her. Kaneie, in response to Michitsuna no haha's manipulations, treats her in a flippant manner. This stimulates her jealousy, and thus creates a circular, seemingly unending schemata of machinations.

When Michitsuna no haha finds her position threatened by Kaneie's other wives, she fights for his affections through the portrayal of her feelings in poetry. Though she is successful in being able to maintain Kaneie's interest through manipulation, her actions lead Kaneie to treat their relationship in a joking manner. When the Machi Alley Woman was about to give birth to a child, Michitsuna no haha is severely threatened because she knows Kaneie will now pay special attention to the Machi Alley Woman. She notes, “He rode out in a single carriage with her, raising a continuous din that could be heard over the entire capital. It was such a racket, so painful to my ears, and did he really have to pass right by my gate?” (Arntzen 81). Kaneie, despite having several streets he could have taken, chose the one that passes right by Michitsuna no haha. Most likely this is due to Kaneie's cavalier attitude toward their relationship.

Michitsuna no haha records that she soon received a letter from him: “About three or four days after this there is a letter from him. Thinking over and over to myself how awfully cold it was, I noticed this, 'Someone has not been feeling well here, so I have not been able to come and visit. However, just yesterday a safe delivery was accomplished. I haven't wanted to trouble you with the ritual pollution.' This surpassed all for being bizarre” (Arntzen 81). His sending Michitsuna no haha a letter to make sure that she knows about the birth suggests that he either did not consider her jealousy over the birth, or he was writing to prove that he has just reason for his lack of visits, the reason being that he did not want Michitsuna no haha to suffer defilement because of the Machi Alley Woman having given birth. Michitsuna no haha, on the other hand, construes this development as a threat to her position.

As expected, after the birth, Kaneie does not visit Michitsuna no haha for twenty days. When he finally sends her a letter, she jumps at the chance to exchange poetry, and he comes to visit her again. In her book *Fictions of Femininity*, Edith Sarra informs us that poetry is “a form of expression that claims for itself the power of making something good or useful happen within a relationship” (Sarra 56). The truth of this statement is evident in this case. When Kaneie intends to leave before dawn, Michitsuna no haha yet again uses poetic exchange to convince him otherwise: “What is there to do?/ Since your heart is like the moon/ that does not linger/ at the edge of the mountain/ but would emerge into the sky.” Kaneie responds, “You say this heart-moon/ emerges into the o'er-spread sky/ yet will it leave/ its reflection/ behind in this pond” (Arntzen 85). Thus by telling him that she couldn't possibly ask him to stay since his heart is the kind that “does not linger,” Kaneie's desire to prove her wrong results in his staying with her the rest of the night. Her representation of grievances through her poetry is able to sway his

decision. His poem in response states that his heart does like to stray, but it will stay with her (behind in this pond) tonight. In this way, she is able to change his mind in accordance with what she desires. It is also of note that she uses a teasing tone with him in stating “your heart is like the moon that does not linger.” This reflects the teasing manner in which he acts towards her. We can see that poetry not only plays a role in courtship traditions, but it is also a way to “toss the ball back and forth” so to speak. In this way they can show each other their wit. Soon after this exchange takes place, Kaneie returns to his visits with Tokihime and pays less attention to Michitsuna no haha than before. She shows her lack of understanding that it is the cultural norm for a woman to have to share her husband with other women. She questions, “I just find it too cruel of him when he says things like 'Have I done anything wrong?' with such an air of innocence and unconcern that I don't know what to do” (Arntzen 89). While Kaneie finds his actions usual, Michitsuna no haha, the narrator, is unable to understand why he is not always by her side. His continuing frivolous behavior coerces her into a long poetic exchange. Getting riled up over the situation, in a romantic fit of desperation, she writes him a 113 line poem explaining her feelings. Kaneie's reaction proves Michitsuna no haha's poetry effective. In response, he composes an equally lengthy poem. Michitsuna no haha can see the passion within the effort that Kaneie put into his poem, so it serves to mend their relationship. Since Kaneie was able to coerce her into initiating a passionate poetic exchange, he no longer has the need to treat her in a flippant manner in order to test her feelings. Making the switch from private grievances to an open display of her grievances through her poetry is an outburst of affection that serves to prove her seriousness, through a direct statement of her feelings hidden behind poetic rhetoric. She is able to be direct while still maintaining a sense of feminine decorum by

masking her directness in poetry. After this round of poetry, Kaneie is given a position at court that he does not like and he begins spending days at a time with Michitsuna no haha. Together they exchange poetry with Prince Noriakira, the man who is in charge at Kaneie's newly assigned post. They even go to see the fourth month Kamo Purification Rites in a carriage together. Michitsuna no haha's passion in her poetry results in Kaneie wanting to spend more time with her. This sense of “togetherness” portrays the closeness in their relationship at this time.

In the third month of the following year, Kaneie incurs a serious illness. Despite it being almost unheard of for a woman to visit a man, and thus considered terribly romantic, Kaneie is able to manipulate Michitsuna no haha into visiting him. Kaneie writes to her in desperation, “To have to part from you in such an unexpected way . . . Even if I manage to stay alive, I will likely not be strong enough to visit you and even were there a time when I might be stronger, how on earth could you ever come to me . . . oh if I die thus, this will be the last time we see each other” (Arntzen 125). While it would be unthinkable for her to go visit him, he has put the notion in her head that he may die, and that it would be best for her to come visit him so they can see each other one more time. She manages to sneak out in a carriage at night to be by his side. While Kaneie once again coerces her into acting out of passion rather than thought, there were benefits in this situation for Michitsuna no haha as well. Her coming to visit him being such a romantic gesture, it would most likely have been taken amiss by Tokihime. On the other hand, through this direct, unrheterical act of a woman visiting a man, she gained power to the extent that Kaneie will now see her as the one out of all of his wives who went through the risk just to see him. Moreover, out of all of his wives, Michitsuna no haha was the only one whom Kaneie

asked to visit him, thus proving his affections for her. In this way, she has gained his favor. Despite the unlikelihood of Tokihime falling out of Kaneie's favor, Michitsuna no haha was able to manipulate her way into a stable position in his affections for many years through such actions.

In Book Two, when their relationship once again falls into disrepair, Kaneie returns to his disrespectful, joking attitude, severe to the point of derision. After ignoring Michitsuna at a *sumo* (traditional Japanese wrestling) tournament, he shows up yelling “Tomorrow is a day of ritual seclusion, lock the doors tight! . . . then pushing away this attendant, pulling that one toward him, whispering in their ears, 'We just have to put up with her, don't we,' then imitating me in a simpering way, he upsets my attendants . . . he just keeps repeating 'It's not that my heart has changed; it is you who keep seeing everything I do in a bad light’” (Arntzen 217). It seems Kaneie feels as though he is going to lose her affections and this scares him. He acts in a crude manner to show how her actions have upset him, in hopes that she will act in return and they can mend their relationship. In a similar incident soon after, Kaneie sends a letter requesting to visit her. When she sends word that she is ill she notes, “just when I had given up all hope of seeing him, he appeared looking as though nothing were wrong at all” (Arntzen 223). As odd as it seems for her to have sent a letter telling him not to come and then still having “hope of seeing him,” she most likely sent it to test him to see if he would come anyway. She probably would have considered it too forward to have directly requested that he come. By telling him not to come, she knows that he will be upset by it and of course come anyway. When she tries to discuss with him how she feels, “his attitude was one of 'What's wrong with you,’” and he proceeds to feign sleep and jump start awake as a joke in order to ease the pressure of the

conversation (Arntzen 223). This manner of game playing irritates her, but it most certainly gets her attention as well. When Kaneie thinks she is becoming too involved with religion he again acts out. “Suddenly he bursts in, takes the incense burner and other usual implements for the day's observances and scatters them about, takes my rosary and throws it up on a high shelf, and otherwise behaves in a wild manner” (Arntzen 259). While Kaneie's behavior upsets her, it also shows her how much he cares. In her work *The Value of Vulnerability*, Margaret Childs states, “When this vulnerability was not a pre-existing condition, men could cause distress by temporarily resorting to aggression” (Childs 1062). Since, Michitsuna no haha is acting invulnerable by taking to religion against her husband's wishes, Kaneie results to acting in an aggressive manner. He is showing her how upset he would be if she were to take the tonsure. His direct actions depict a more masculine manner of expressing oneself. By acting wildly, he proves his feelings for her. The man who proposed in a half serious-half joking manner takes their entire relationship this way. He proves his sincerity, but always plays it off in a joking manner in order to provoke his wife.

Pilgrimages as coercion

One of the recurring themes of manipulation in *Kagero nikki* is the pursuit of religious pilgrimages. Women often used pilgrimages not only as a way to worship and exhibit religiosity, but also as a form of escapism. It was a way for them to get out of their houses and away from worries about relationships. However, Michitsuna no haha repeatedly uses pilgrimages as a way to draw Kaneie's attention. And conversely, when their relationship is at its worst, pilgrimages become a threat towards the future of their relationship. By making a pilgrimage, Michitsuna no haha is threatening to become a nun. One wonders, how does she know he will always come

back for her when she runs off on a pilgrimage? After all, Sei Shonagon in her *Makura no soshi* states in a list of “Awkward and Pointless Things” the woman who “in the grip of foolish jealousy...goes into hiding from her husband, certain that he'll come looking for her – but he's in no mind to do so, and goes about in brazen indifference” (McKinney 127). That it could come to such a situation must have been a concern. However, she most likely didn't know for certain that he would come to meet her when she went on a pilgrimage. Michitsuna no haha, in young age, believed that the old romance tales show how a relationship should be. Because of this, she considered her relationship bad enough that if Kaneie did not come for her, the only thing left for her to do was to actually take the tonsure. At times, the only thing that kept her from doing so was the fact that Michitsuna, her son, relied on her. One must wonder where Michitsuna no haha came up with such a rash, yet brilliant idea to attract her husband's attention. It is most likely that she heard of another situation where this happened and turned out favorably. As expected, a similar turn of events is actually mentioned within the *nikki* in Book One. “The assistant commander of the Guards . . . without warning abandoned his mother and wife, stole away to Mt. Hiei and became a monk even though he was still young and seemed to have no reason for suffering . . . I heard that his wife too had become a nun” (Arntzen 145). In reading this portion of the text we can see a resemblance in the assistant commander of the Guards to Michitsuna no haha herself. Both are in a seemingly normal relationship, while deep down there is suffering. Hearing this turn of events she probably hoped that, were she to take the tonsure, Kaneie would follow suit, or at least come to stop her from doing so.

Within the text we see multiple examples of pilgrimages leading up to the climax of the story, her pilgrimage to Hannya Temple. The first several times that a pilgrimage is mentioned,

the trips have an air of the Michitsuna no haha trying to get away in order to relax for a while. This also serves to grab Kaneie's attention because when Michitsuna's mother leaves for days, he misses her, and on several occasions he meets her on her way home, or immediately visits upon her return.

We first see this occur during Michitsuna no haha's trip to Hase Temple in Book One. Kaneie asks her to postpone the trip because his daughter with Tokihime is serving in the Purification Ceremony connected with Enthronement Rites that month. However, stating, “as that is not really my affair” she decides to leave anyway without Kaneie's knowledge (Arntzen 153). Being miffed that Kaneie has considered Tokihime's daughter more important, in addition to her jealousy towards the accomplishment of Tokihime's daughter, pushes her to leave anyway. When he sends her a note requesting her return date, she responds, “It seems that we have arrived smoothly at this place Tsubaichi . . . I am thinking of going from here even deeper into the mountains, so I cannot tell you exactly the date of our return” (Arntzen 157). Through this letter we can see that the protagonist is enjoying the attention she has received from running off, and is likely trying to see how far she can push it. By not telling him when she will return, she causes him great concern— especially since he had asked her to put the journey off to begin with. Despite it being close to the ceremony that his daughter is to be in, he comes to meet Michitsuna no haha as she is returning home. She is once again successful in garnering his attentions. Upon her return home, she even helps Kaneie with the preparations for the Purification Ceremony. This is one of the few times when she happily goes along with his requests. While she is happy that she was able to take her pilgrimage and view the countryside, she is also happy that she was able to gain Kaneie's attention by causing him to anxiously await

her return. As her sewing skills were valued by Kaneie, he no doubt would have been concerned over completing the Purification Ceremony's preparations without her help. Able to garner his interest in this manner, she gladly helps with the preparations.

Another pilgrimage of interest is Michitsuna no haha's pilgrimage to Ishiyama Temple in Book Two. Kaneie has at this point almost entirely ceased his visits to her, and she soon hears that he may be courting another woman. She is told that it is either the Omi Woman or one of the late Emperor's daughters. Her distress over the situation is evident, and it is suggested that she go on a pilgrimage. However, no one intended for her to go about it in the way that she did. "As I intend to go secretly, I don't even let my own sister know, and, gathering my courage, I run out of the house just at the time I thought it might be growing light" (Arntzen 207). The way in which she leaves shows how upset she is over the situation with Kaneie. Furthermore, leaving just as it is getting light out shows that she does not want people to stop her from going. Later, she returns from the temple in higher spirits than when she had left. At the beginning of the next month after her return, we see the aforementioned incident where Kaneie storms in and claims it to be a day of "ritual seclusion" (Arntzen 217). Her pilgrimage instigates Kaneie's wild actions. He shows his distress over Michitsuna's mother having left without notifying anyone, and consequently shows his love for her. In this case again his worry over her has driven him mad. Once again Kaneie makes a joke of her efforts towards religion. However, after several months his visits cease again, and Michitsuna no haha becomes more upset as Kaneie flies past her gate in his carriage without stopping to visit. He later claims that he thought she was at her father's residence. Michitsuna no haha herself realizes that this is unlikely, especially since Kaneie's messenger knew which household to take her letters to.

By this point in Book Two Michitsuna no haha begins to use religion as a threat to Kaneie. She no longer hides her desires behind flowery, poetic words, and converses with him in a forthright manner. By acting in a direct manner, as Kaneie coerced her into doing in the past with writing long poetry and coming to visit him when he was ill, she hopes to get a favorable reaction as she did before. This switch from indirect rhetoricality to forthright conversation and actions is evident. In response to his letter, rather than sending poetry, she sends, “one could never have guessed this was a place you used to visit. But, no doubt this is all due to my having tarried in the world till now. I shall say no more” (Arntzen 231). She implies that her trust in him has obviously been misplaced, and she wonders why she has relied on him for so long when he treats her so poorly. She wonders why she hasn't already taken the tonsure when he has caused her this much suffering, and thus blames Kaneie for her misfortunes. Therefore, she decides to go on a pilgrimage to Hannya Temple. Before leaving, she uses Michitsuna to take a letter to Kaneie telling him that she has decided to go. When we consider most of her pilgrimages up until this point we see that when she leaves, Kaneie shows his concern over her. We cannot doubt that the reason for her letter is the hope that he will once again do so on this trip. She tells Michitsuna to say that she has already left. If she were to be stopped at this point, she would only appear silly to Kaneie, and not achieve her goal of drawing his concern and attention. Just as she expected, Kaneie, upon exchanging letters with her attendants, becomes concerned that she will become a nun, and comes to see her despite being in ritual seclusion. She explains that she only came for one night, and Kaneie returns home. Despite having already obtained her goal by getting Kaneie to come after her, she feels as if she cannot return because people in the capital believe that she has become a nun. After staying at the temple for a while,

Kaneie once again returns. He becomes concerned and immediately removes her from the temple, using Michitsuna to coerce her into leaving. Once he realizes she will be returning with him, he begins to treat the situation like it is all just a game to him. Michitsuna's mother describes it as Kaneie having, “turned the scene into a noisy farce” (Arntzen 255). While the protagonist has successfully manipulated him into coming back twice to get her, Kaneie berates her as if she were a child, and cracks jokes during the trip home. Most likely he is showing his relief knowing that she has returned to him now. His making light of the situation, however, also serves to upset Michitsuna's mother and thus convince her to not act in such a way again. By acting flippant, he shows her how foolish she has been to think of running off and becoming a nun, and thus makes it more likely she will not do such a thing again. Additionally, the narrator depicting Kaneie in this manner creates sympathy from the reader. Despite his levity, Kaneie having returned twice for her proves that he cares. Sarra explains, “the *Kagero* heroine's seclusion at Narutake would have to be understood simply as a demonstration of her power over her husband. The fact that Kaneie pursues her testifies to her continued importance to him as a wife” (Sarra 37). Michitsuna no haha uses pilgrimages to successfully garner Kaneie's attention.

Children as Persuasion

A second manner of persuasion recurring throughout *Kagero nikki* is the use of children as coercion. Through the use of children, Michitsuna no haha and Kaneie can both indirectly influence each other's actions. Kaneie makes extensive use of this technique throughout the *nikki*. Sarra explains, “During earlier marital disputes, the boy has often figured as a pawn or a prize, shamelessly made use of by both husband and wife” (Sarra 70). We first see such a case

when Kaneie and Michitsuna no haha have gotten into a fight in Book One. “He walked out onto the veranda and called our young one to him, and among other things said, 'I will no longer be coming here.' As soon as he had left, my son came into the room convulsed with sobbing” (Arntzen 135). Kaneie deliberately says these things to Michitsuna because he knows that it will upset him, and thus his threat of never returning will be taken more seriously. If he had personally said to Michitsuna no haha that he would not be returning, she may have considered that it was just the heat of the argument making him say such things, and he would not be taken as seriously. Moreover, saying this to Michitsuna rather than to his mother pushes his point, saying, “if you don't care for me then I will leave and no longer care for you, nor our child.” Additionally, he knows that Michitsuna will cry to her. Seeing her son crying over the potential loss of his father makes Michitsuna no haha consider the implications of such a loss herself. She even states, “Of course, I could imagine how it was for him [Michitsuna]” (Arntzen 135). In this way it can be seen that not only Michitsuna, but his mother as well, felt the pain of such an affront to her feelings.

Kaneie again makes use of his son in Book Two, when Michitsuna no haha goes on her pilgrimage to Hannya Temple. He blames Michitsuna for his mother leaving for the temple and not returning. “Father is very angry. He says, 'This is all your fault. You haven't said anything to her to make her change her mind'” (Arntzen 235). Again, making Michitsuna upset serves Kaneie's purpose of getting her to return home from the temple. Taking his anger out on Michitsuna could make his mother feel bad for him, and persuade her to return. After several days, Michitsuna is used by both parents. Kaneie uses him to get Michitsuna no haha to write letters with the threat that if she doesn't, Michitsuna will be scolded again. Michitsuna no haha

herself attempts to upset Kaneie by saying that “our son seems loath to approach you again” (Arntzen 247). When Kaneie comes for the second time to take her home, it is ultimately Michitsuna that convinces her to return. “(Kaneie) exclaimed, 'If that is how it is, one way or another, it is for you to decide. If she will leave, then let's have the carriage drawn up.' Before he had finished saying this, my son leaped up and just began to gather all the things scattered around...while all this was happening, he looked on, exchanging glances with my son, seeming very much amused” (Arntzen 255). At this point, Kaneie knows that Michitsuna does not want to remain there being forced to fast with his mother. Having Michitsuna decide his mother's actions makes it seem like Kaneie isn't forcing her even though he already knows what his son's decision will be. Michitsuna at this point is likely fed up with being used as a go-between for his parents' conversations, so he jumps at the chance to make his mother return home. Kaneie again acts nonchalant towards the situation, and treats the Buddha as a joke. He is treating this situation as a game in which he has just won this round.

Towards the end of the *nikki* in Book Three, Michitsuna no haha begins to use this technique herself. When Kaneie has turned his attentions elsewhere for a while, he suddenly drives by in his carriage. Michitsuna no haha thinks that he is surely just passing by, when in fact he does show up. With everything in her household in disarray, Kaneie feels awkward and leaves soon after. Michitsuna no haha expresses, “I felt even worse about all the unsightliness, but beyond that, I felt as though I had lost his favor” (Arntzen 283). She feels that their relationship may have finally come to its end. Realizing that she has only given birth to one child, she decides to take in a daughter from another family. She finds a woman whom Kaneie had had an affair with in the past, and offers to take in her daughter. Finding a child of Kaneie's,

Michitsuna no haha hopes that he will feel some attachment to the child, and hence come to visit more often. Moreover, since she is a girl, Michitsuna no haha hopes that Kaneie will be especially attracted because of the political potential of marrying her to someone high in rank. When the girl is brought to the household, by rare chance Kaneie comes to visit. Upon seeing her, “Well, I never, out of the blue like this, just when I was thinking of not coming here anymore, now to have such a person here— I'll just have to take you home with me.” So he joked . . . After that, when he wrote letters, he always asked, ‘How is the little one?’ and the letters came often” (Arntzen 295). While Kaneie cracks jokes about the situation, he is ironically speaking Michitsuna no haha's thoughts aloud. He has picked up on her way of thought exactly, and is making light of her ploy to mend their relationship. In this way he is trying to reassure her that he wouldn't stop coming to see her over something so simple as her house being unprepared— especially after they have been married for years. It is obvious that he is playing along with her game here. Despite Kaneie's levity, Michitsuna no haha's machinations have once again worked in her favor. He starts frequently writing letters to her again, and seems to completely treat the child as his own.

By showing the reader what a struggle she has had with her life, Michitsuna no haha the narrator, hopes to prove to the reader that her story is reality, while the old tales are false. She tells the story of a protagonist who had to struggle daily as one of many wives, to compete for the affections of one man. We can see that using conventions of femininity, the author as protagonist tried to manipulate Kaneie, and thus keep his attention on her. Between normal pilgrimages that a woman would take, and taking advantage of Kaneie's children to keep his attention, she uses both as threats to leave him, and consequently as coercion to get him to stay

with her. While initially the protagonist's correspondences with her husband are hidden behind indirect rhetoric, her desperation causes a change to direct actions and statements of her feelings. These manipulations that Michitsuna no haha takes entirely seriously are seen by Kaneie as a game. Accordingly, he treats their relationship in that manner and plays along with her games. In this way, it can be seen that women did have power in their relationships. While at times they were helpless and sat and waited for their husband to return, they did have both direct and indirect actions they could take to manipulate him to direct his attention to her. Despite the author's initial intentions for writing *Kagero nikki*, through the protagonist's actions, the reader is shown how a woman could stand on equal footing with her husband, and how she has the ability to control the continuation of their relationship.

The Flaunting of Intelligence in

Makura no Soshi

Makura no soshi, or *The Pillow Book*, is a *zuihitsu* written by another woman of the provincial governor status, Sei Shonagon. The author began composition during her time at court, and her work was commissioned by her patron, Empress Teishi. Unconventionally, Sei Shonagon did not begin at court until her late twenties. Meredith McKinney, translator of *Makura no soshi* into English notes, “[She was] considerably older than most newly employed gentlewomen, and around ten years older than the Empress” (McKinney xi). She would have been considered fairly aged at this point in her life. Being a *zuihitsu*, *Makura no soshi* is composed in an entirely different manner from conventional *nikki*. *Makura no soshi* contains three types of passages-- lists, essays, and diaries--none of which have been maintained in their historical order, thus making it difficult to relate the author's passages to the political goings-on

of the time. However, since it is a *zuihitsu*, random jottings are the purpose and thus the text is not rendered indecipherable because of it. Because of the text not being in chronological order, and the episodic, non-linear nature of the work, there are currently four different versions of *Makura no soshi*.

Sei Shonagon depicts her life as a woman at court in a lighthearted, witty manner, leaving out few details of her surroundings. This is one of the aspects that sets *Makura no soshi* apart from other *nikki*: its sanguine nature. Sarra agrees that the world that is depicted within *Makura no soshi* is different from depictions within other *nikki*. She illustrates, “It may be that one of the greatest contributions *The Pillow Book* makes to the Heian women's tradition is its linking of eroticism with humor and, most strikingly, feminine laughter and pleasure (Sarra 256). This lightheartedness is especially surprising due to the battle for power that was occurring within court during this time. During the time Sei Shonagon was a gentlewoman under Empress Teishi, the empress's rival, Empress Shoshi, was about to come into power. With the possibility of losing political backing, and the eventual rise of Empress Shoshi's influence during the writing of this text, one would expect a completely different tone to her work. Additionally, the author does not discuss politics or romance in a forthright manner. She leaves it up to the reader to decide what follows based on the information she has given. And since the passages are no longer in chronological order, it is difficult for the reader to determine how political events may have swayed her narrative style and actions. One can surmise that romance, politics, or a composition of the author's life were not objectives in writing *Makura no soshi*.

Meredith McKinney theorizes that Shonagon's purpose for producing *Makura no soshi* was to make a guide book for poetry composition. “Given the importance of poetic allusion in

her world, such a compendium would have been of great interest to her readers, in a way it cannot be for us” (McKinney xxi). This idea is based on the many list passages throughout the text. Also, her way of describing things shows a discerning nature. It is likely she uses this to show the reader what would be acceptable to write about under certain circumstances. A second theory is contributed by Naomi Fukumori in her work, “Sei Shonagon's *Makura no soshi*: A Revisionary History,” referring to the period of time in which Shonagon left court due to rumors of her political siding with Empress Shoshi. She poses, “Might Sei not have been motivated to clear the suspicions of her treachery by creating a loyal, favorable portrait of Teishi's salon (that is, by avoiding direct reference to the actual socio-political circumstances)?” (Fukumori 12). However, the only reasoning we are given within the text itself is that Sei Shonagon was given a large amount of paper by Empress Teishi. ““What do you think we could write on this?’ Her Majesty inquired. ‘They are copying *Records of the Historian* over at his majesties court.’ ‘This should be a “pillow,” then’ I suggested. ‘Very well, it's yours,’ declared Her Majesty, and she handed it over to me” (McKinney 255). Whether her purpose was a poetic sort of “guide book” or to persuade others against her supposed treachery cannot be determined. The only statement made by the author in regards to this portrays how she received the paper and in what manner her work was commissioned. We also discover that when the author began composition, she did not intend for others to see it.

After all, I merely wrote for my personal amusement things that I myself have thought and felt . . . Anyway, it does upset me that people have seen these pages. When Captain of the Left Tsunefusa . . . came to visit me . . . my book disconcertingly happened to be on the mat from the nearby corner that was put out for him. I scrambled to try and retrieve it, but he carried it off with him, and kept it for a very long time before returning it (McKinney 256).

She states her reason for writing as “personal amusement,” however, we see that after a certain

portion of writing had been completed, her composition was found and she gained an audience. Throughout the book she makes several addresses to the reader. It would be interesting to be able to view the way in which her writing style adapted to having a readership. Nonetheless, without knowing the original intended order of the passages, such a study is impossible.

Despite the vagaries of the text's transmission, what we are able to glean from *Makura no soshi* is information about the way women were expected to act. Shonagon herself admits to having a different view on things in comparison to others. She writes about herself, “you can judge just how unimpressive someone is if they dislike things that most people like, and praise things that others condemn” (McKinney 256). With our current knowledge of the expectations placed on women during the Heian period we can see that this is true. Knowing that we have a protagonist who will act against expectations will help us to recognize two things: first, that her actions against the feminine norm will serve to further prove what the expectations for women were, and second, that not all women acted within the realm of expectation. Some women acted as an antithesis to the feminine norm to prove themselves capable and intelligent. Sarra shows that the Sei Shonagon portrays herself as being contrary to expectation, commenting, “Her text powerfully suggests . . . the hand of a writer who can play with the seams of the polygynous system, exposing the looseness of it, the fictionality of the image . . . of the upper-class woman as isolated and passive, cut off from any alternative to simply waiting for one man and that man only” (Sarra 247). The image of the *matsu onna* (waiting woman) is the major theme of *Kagero nikki*, but Sei Shonagon serves to break apart women's conventions. Throughout *Makura no soshi*, Sei Shonagon delights in the unexpected, acts against feminine norms, and proves herself to be more than a match in wit for any man. While never acting in a manner that would be

considered truly masculine, her subversion of femininity and flaunting of her knowledge serve to prove her wit, intelligence, and discerning ability to the reader and consequently make statements about femininity and relationships.

Appreciation for the Unusual

Recurrent in *Makura no soshi* is a portrayal of delight in the unexpected. Shonagon acts in an antithetical manner, and consequently finds enjoyment in such things. When Shonagon and several other female attendants stay up late discussing trivialities and arguing over which clothing article has the most boring name, the night-priest breaks in, “No no, that's a very bad idea. Do keep talking all night ladies.’ This was not only very entertaining, but also gave us a terrible start” (McKinney 133). Her surprise at the priest's sudden interjection shows her delight in something unexpected having happened: a monk, who is ostensibly removed from worldly concerns, taking an interest in the desultory conversations of female attendants. We again see her dislike of normalcy when Fujiwara Tadanobu, a high-ranking courtier, discusses making their relationship more intimate. Shonagon refuses on the grounds that if they got closer she would no longer be able to praise him. She argues, “Well that's all very well, but I happen to hate that sort of thing. I can't stand people, men or women, who adore their lovers, and are always taking their side and praising them” (McKinney 134). In Tadanobu's opinion, a woman would normally say good things about her lover, because she has feelings for him. However, Shonagon finds that sort of thing “embarrassing.” It is fine for her to praise Tadanobu since they are not intimate, but if they were intimate it would be embarrassing because people would think she was only saying good things about him because of their closeness. She shows that she dislikes normal female reactions in this situation. Her enjoyment of the unanticipated is once

again shown in reminiscence of *The Rehearsal of Performance*, which takes place at the provisional festivals of the Kamo Shrine and the Iwashimizu Hachiman Shrine:

It's only at this courtyard performance that the dancers' musicians can come and go in the presence of the emperor. The court nobles and senior courtiers all take turns with the celebratory sake cup, and finish by drinking a round from a spiral-shell cup before they stand, at which point the leftover-gatherers emerge – these are offputting enough to witness when they're men, but in the case of this imperial event even women appear. They suddenly come scampering out from the guard's fire hut, which you've assumed till that moment to be empty, and start scrabbling for the food, but the ones who try to grab all they can get keep spilling it, and they lose out to those who make a swift grab and then turn and run. It's most entertaining to watch them making clever use of the handy fire hut as a store for their booty” (McKinney 141).

Shonagon describes the actions of the lowly “leftover-gatherers” in great detail, showing how vividly she remembers it in her mind. She describes watching the “leftover-gatherers” as being both off-putting and entertaining. This fact alone displays for the reader a sense of strange things inspiring excitement. She also revels in the fact that the female commoners are not missing out on the gathering. They too have joined the men to scavenge the leftover food—something else that was quite unexpected. Through these events, Shonagon's “dislike things that most people like and praise things that others condemn” line of thinking is portrayed through her penchant for the unusual and a dislike of the ordinary (McKinney 256).

In a list of “Dispiriting Things,” she makes note of a normal occurrence for women, “when a man stops coming to visit his wife at her home. It's a great shame if he's gone off with a lady of good family who serves at court, and the wife sits moping at home, feeling ashamed and humiliated” (McKinney 24). Oftentimes a husband would stay away for a while if he became married to a new wife. As well, if a woman were of lower aristocratic status, she couldn't expect to remain a principal wife. Men have the potential to marry women higher in status, and were

they to do so, they would then begin to focus their attentions on their new wife. As we were able to see in *Kagero nikki*, it was fairly normal for a man to suddenly turn his attentions to another woman, leaving his current wives to wait for his return. Shonagon then follows up the list with, “It's even more dispiriting for a man when a woman fails to visit him” (McKinney 24). This is an unusual statement at first glance. It was rare for a woman to ever visit a man in Heian aristocratic society. On the other hand, for a woman to do so would be considered extremely romantic. For a woman not to visit a lover on the rare occasion that he is expecting her to visit shows that the woman has prioritized societal boundaries before her love. This exemplifies the author's interest in the out of the ordinary. For her to state that a woman not visiting a man is dispiriting, she can mean two things. First, she is as the author taking on a persona of someone who is not bound by gender restrictions. Second, she is knowledgeable when it comes to romance. Saying that a woman failing to visit a man is dispiriting is equivalent to saying that a world without that kind of desperate romance is dispiriting.

Antithetical Actions

Within *Makura no soshi*, Sei Shonagon poses as the antithesis to the feminine norm and acts in a flaunting manner. We see Shonagon act against feminine convention after a trip to hear the *hototogisu* bird:

Your Majesty instructs me to make a poem, my only impulse is to flee . . . It's an offense to my late father's name, to fancy myself as a poet and put myself forward to make some plausible-sounding poem, when in fact what I write has nothing special to recommend it at all.' Her Majesty smiled and replied, 'Well if that's how you feel, we shall leave it up to you, and not demand that you compose anything' (McKinney 103).

Sei Shonagon uses her lineage, that of exemplary poets, to create an excuse for not composing

poetry. She feigns humility in expressing the pressure to produce above-average poetry, because of her lineage. Since a large portion of communication not only between lovers, but between friends as well, relied on the passing back and forth of poetry, the empress finds her request unusual. Thus, in order to humor Shonagon, and out of her own amusement, Empress Teishi assents to Shonagon's request. Since communication between lovers relied so heavily on poetry, Shonagon giving it up would be tantamount to giving up her femininity. Without poetry she could not be courted in the conventional way. Through the empress's amusement, it can be seen that in Empress Teishi's court, behaving in an atypical manner was a prized characteristic.

Sei Shonagon and Empress Teishi were very close, and Empress Teishi often instigated Shonagon into acting unconventionally. When Michitaka's second daughter Genshi comes to visit the empress, Empress Teishi convinces Shonagon to sneak and watch from behind a pillar. The other ladies are outraged. The worst event would be Shonagon being seen. If a woman were to openly show herself it was considered risqué. She soon comes out from behind the pillar and is hidden behind a screen only. The other ladies-in-waiting whisper, "That's no way to behave! She's bound to get in trouble!" - which I must say amused me" (McKinney 108). Sei Shonagon expresses her amusement at acting in an untoward manner. She acts without fear of being seen. Because she portrays herself as being without this fear, the ladies-in-waiting, whose thoughts are on what others will think of their actions, seem amusing to Sei Shonagon. Then the blind is pulled up and Shonagon "felt as if I was being stripped of a magic cloak of invisibility. Bereft, and longing to see more, I hastily moved further round" (McKinney 110). A normal woman, due to the fear of being exposed would have quickly moved back. Shonagon, on the other hand, moves around so she can gain a better view from behind a pillar. She is not bound

by the feminine standards of remaining hidden, and when she is almost exposed, she does not state her fear; she simply feels “bereft” at having to find a new place to gaze from. When her sleeves were seen from under the blinds, Michitaka, the empress's father, responds with pride that Shonagon would want to view his children, rather than being judgmental towards a woman who is acting out of order. He responds this way because her acting out of the ordinary makes him feel special, that his family has caused an exception in feminine behavior.

In another passage she explains why, in contrast to the other ladies, she no longer has a fear of being seen, “A gentleman wouldn't come across as many people as we gentlewomen do — though probably they do while they're at court its true. I can see why a lady who has served at court could be considered less than suitably refined when she's later installed as someone's wife and is treated with due respect” (McKinney 22). Shonagon expresses that since the ladies-in-waiting come across so many people at court, it would be ridiculous to fear being seen. She also agrees that those who are seen would be considered “less than suitably refined”; however, she shows that thinking in such a way would be impossible at court with the number of people that are constantly looking at her. It is remarkable to contrast this viewpoint with the way she was when first arriving to serve at court: “When I first went into court service, everything seemed to overwhelm me with confusion and embarrassment, and there were times when I could hardly hold back my tears” (McKinney 168). She continues in this passage to depict a time when Grand Councillor Korechika talked to her through a standing curtain and she was so nervous that she could not respond at all. In this passage, Shonagon describes herself adapting to court life. She portrays to the reader how naïve she was when first arriving to court, and depicts herself as someone who has now evolved past such fears.

When a mysterious visitor comes to see Shonagon while she is staying in Empress Teishi's quarters, she once again proves herself as the antithesis to the feminine archetype. In the Heian period, women wrote in what is called “women's hand” (*onnade*) or “grass style,” and men mostly wrote in Chinese. Men were expected to show extensive knowledge of Chinese texts, whereas women were expected to convey no knowledge of these texts. Histories and important texts were copied in Chinese for men to study, and fictional works, which were considered trivialities, were composed by women in grass hand. While women were not supposed to have knowledge of Chinese, it can be seen in several *nikki* that this was not actually the case. However, many women, as we will see later in the case of Murasaki Shikibu, hid their knowledge of Chinese in order to fit into society's expectations. We see, on the other hand, that this is not the case with Sei Shonagon. When the visitor sticks a piece of bamboo under the blinds Shonagon states, “‘Well, well,’ I said. ‘So it’s “this gentleman, is it?”’” (McKinney 136). This comment relates the bamboo to a Chinese poem by Fujiwara Atsumochi. Without hesitation, Shonagon shows her knowledge of poetry composed in Chinese. Secretary Controller Yukinari says in response, “‘How is it that you can say things like that, the sort of thing most people wouldn’t know? Who taught you?’ ‘But I had no idea that was the name of the bamboo,’ I protested...‘No of course, how could you know?’ said he with a touch of sarcasm” (McKinney 137). Yukinari shows his incredulousness towards her actions. When questioned about her knowledge, however, Shonagon falls into a sarcastic denial of knowing any such thing, mimicking conventional female behavior. Yukinari's sarcastic response exposes to the reader that Shonagon's denial of her knowledge was only made in mockery of traditional feminine attempts to hide their knowledge of Chinese. She has thus proven her intelligence through her

knowledge of Chinese, and her knowledge of the appropriate way to act in this situation. Showing her knowledge of Chinese is a subversion of societal expectations for women, and her reaction portrays how easily she could skirt the boundaries of femininity. By in one instant flaunting her knowledge and in the next instant denying it, she highlights how little consideration she has for societal norms. She is proving that she *can* subvert femininity as long as she denies any knowledge of having done so. It can be seen throughout the book that Sei Shonagon flaunts her learning in a way that could be considered inappropriate by society, and then reins in her display through denial or appropriate representation. It is also of note that Shonagon's knowledge of Chinese learning appears in interactions with men and with Empress Teishi, the selective few who can appreciate her intelligence, and from whom Shonagon would gain much from eliciting praise.³

She consistently writes passages relating to amusing conversations, or events that occurred involving her and her male friends. In several cases we see that Shonagon and senior courtier Fujiwara Tadanobu are close enough to have inside jokes together. She explains, “We would use the terms of a game of *go* to talk about courtship – if a man and a woman were becoming intimate we'd refer to it as 'he's played a leading stone on her', or 'it's into the final stones', or 'he'll be rallying his stones' and so on, which of course other people couldn't be expected to understand” (McKinney 159). We can see through their code language how close the two of them were. In many *nikki* we see women acting shy towards men, or fearing that they will be viewed as flirtatious by others. This can be seen both in *Kagero nikki* and *Murasaki Shikibu nikki*. In *Kagero nikki*, so as not to appear too forward when being courted by Kaneie,

3 Further explanation of the use of Chinese by Heian period aristocratic women is explained in Naomi Fukumori's article, “Chinese Learning as Performative Power in *Makura no soshi* and *Murasaki Shikibu nikki*. ”

Michitsuna no haha uses an intermediary to reply to his poems. Not allowing him to see her handwriting gives Michitsuna no haha a way to respond to Kaneie while creating distance by not allowing him to see her handwriting. Responding to his poetry favorably from the start in her own hand would give others the impression that she is an “easy” woman. Secondly, in *Murasaki Shikibu nikki* the narrator discusses the ladies-in-waiting's reactions to the Master of the Empress's Household, Fujiwara Tadanobu's visit. She states, “the senior women are so helpless and childish that they hardly ever come out to greet him, and when they do, they seem unable to say anything in the least appropriate . . . it's just that they feel so self conscious and embarrassed that they are afraid of saying something silly, so they refuse to say anything at all and try to make themselves as invisible as possible” (Bowring 129). In comparison to the way Sei Shonagon and Tadanobu gossip about other's relationships together, the women of Empress Shoshi's court are too shy to even greet him when he comes to see the Empress. This shyness is in direct contrast to Shonagon's close friendship with Tadanobu, and highlights the difference between the women in Empress Teishi's court and Empress Shoshi's court.

In the aforementioned incident of Empress Teishi instigating Shonagon's unconventional behavior we were shown Teishi's regard for Shonagon. Towards the end of the work we can see the reason Teishi would prompt such behavior. She states, “‘Shonagon, what do you make of the snow of Koro Peak?’ Thereupon I ordered that the shutters be lifted, and raised the outer blind high. Her Majesty laughed. One of the ladies also remarked appreciatively . . . 'You epitomize the sort of person who belongs in this court’” (McKinney 238). Empress Teishi's query and Sei Shonagon's reaction both reference a Chinese poem by Bo Juyi, a favorite poem among Heian aristocrats. Both women show their knowledge of Chinese literature. The praise given by

another lady-in-waiting may give us insight into Shonagon's behavior. Her proclaiming Shonagon as someone who “belongs in this court,” and the fact that Empress Teishi herself makes a test out of Chinese poetry for Shonagon shows that intelligence was something which was prized in her court. Shonagon was able to prove her knowledge without directly referencing the poem. This show of wit was considered more important to Teishi than one fitting into a societal standard that says the flaunting of one's knowledge is wrong. However, as we will see in *Murasaki Shikibu nikki*, showing one's intelligence was not always the proper thing to do. It could be construed as both acting in a masculine manner, and as the boasting of one's knowledge.

Comparisons and Exclusivity

Sei Shonagon's subversion of femininity leads to a comparison between her and men. Throughout her work, she proves her wit, and her intelligence is considered to be on par with that of men. When visiting the household of Senior Steward Narimasa, the carriage that Shonagon was in was too large and could not fit through Narimasa's gate. She berates him, “‘But think of that man who once made his gate especially grand and tall,’ I said. ‘Good heavens, how astonishing!’ he exclaimed. ‘You must be referring to Yu Dingguo. If I weren't a seasoned scholar myself, I would have no hope of understanding this reference’” (McKinney 9). The “man who once made his gate especially grand and tall” refers to an old Chinese story. Shonagon once again uses her proficient knowledge of Chinese classics to show that she is just as witty as any man. Narimasa then tries to produce a rebuttal by showing his understanding of her reference and establishing what a “seasoned scholar” he is. Conversely, he proves his ignorance by naming the wrong person in the story. While Shonagon was referring to the father

of the story, Narimasa names Yu Dingguo, the son. Narimasa's lapse shows that Shonagon's knowledge is more extensive than his. In this passage, placing herself in comparison to the blundering Narimasa, Shonagon demonstrates her exceptional cleverness.

It can be seen that other people compare Shonagon to men in order to show her greatness. When Empress Teishi asks the ladies-in-waiting to each compose a poem for her, she gives Shonagon a favorable judgment. Shonagon writes, “ ‘With the passing years/ My years grow old upon me/ yet when I see/ this lovely flower of spring/ I forget age and time' but I changed 'flower of spring' to 'your face, my lady'” (McKinney 19). Shonagon borrows a poem from the poetry anthology, *Kokinshu* (A collection of poems old and new), and composes a line to appropriately fit the situation. Empress Teishi responds with a similar story, “Our present Regent, who was Captain Third Rank at the time, wrote the following poem, 'As the tide swells/ in Izumo's Always Bay/ so always and always/ oh how my heart swells and fills/ deep with love to think of you' but he changed the last line to read 'deep with trust in you my lord', and His Majesty was full of praise for him” (McKinney 20). Empress Teishi compares Sei Shonagon's way of thought to that of a man's. Not only does she do this, but she is in fact comparing Shonagon to the current Regent and her own father, Michitaka. By assimilating Shonagon to Michitaka, Empress Teishi validates Shonagon's wit, and demonstrates that her brilliance is on par with that of great men.

In another situation, Shonagon shows that she would only keep company with the most intelligent people. This exclusivity is shown when Shonagon leaves the imperial palace without telling Captain Consultant Fujiwara Tadanobu where she is going, but does tell several other people including Left Gate Watch, Tachibana Norimitsu. Since Norimitsu is considered Sei

Shonagon's "brother" figure, and is supposed by historians to have at one time been Shonagon's husband, Tadanobu assumes Norimitsu's knowledge on the matter and demands that Norimitsu tell him where she went. In order to restrain himself from laughing, Norimitsu shoves large amounts of seaweed into his mouth. Later, he sends a note to Shonagon asking if he should really continue to hide her location from Tadanobu, and in response she sends back a piece of seaweed. In this way, she tries to remind him how he has kept his silence until now. He responds, "Who would send such a crazy packet to anyone? There must have been some mistake.' The man is quite clueless! I thought. I was so disgusted I simply couldn't bear the sight of him." She then composes the following poem, "The silent seaweed/ said that you must never tell/ the secret dwelling place/ of the diving fisher girl/ concealed in these hidden depths" (McKinney 74). Through this poem she tries to explain his oversight. This poem also sends another meaning to him, however. They had vowed to never send poetry to each other unless they wanted to end their relationship. Because of this, Shonagon's poem served to cut the ties of their relationship. This passage explains much about her personality. First, we notice that she and Norimitsu were in a relationship where they would not send poetry— especially unusual considering their marriage. This shows that Shonagon is a very different kind of woman from Michitsuna no haha. While Michitsuna no haha strived for that romantic moment sealed through poetic exchange, we can see that Sei Shonagon was perfectly fine with a relationship devoid of romanticism. Second, it can be seen that when Norimitsu fails to catch on to her wit, she does not hesitate to sever their relationship. Wit and intelligence being desired in Teishi's salon, Sei Shonagon finds pride in surrounding herself with people who epitomize those qualities. When they are no longer of use to her, she sees fit to discard them. It is very interesting to see that she

is the one who ended their relationship, when it is often the theme in *nikki* for a man to stop visiting a woman when she is no longer of use to him, for example, a wife who cannot bear more children, or even one he has simply lost interest in. And here we can see the exact opposite: Shonagon prizes intelligence above all else in those who keep her company, and since Norimitsu has proven himself inferior, she has lost interest and thus ends their relationship. She depicts what a truly discerning person she is.

Later, we see the portrayal of two situations where men show their jealousy over her wit. In the first situation, Empress Teishi's brother Takaie discusses new ribs that he has found for their fans. He proclaims, “Truly, they're not the sort of thing anyone's ever laid eyes on!...at this point I remarked, 'Well then, they can't be fan ribs, they must be the ribs of a jellyfish’” (McKinney 105). By remarking this, Shonagon means that since these ribs have never been seen before, they have to be jellyfish ribs. Since jellyfish do not have ribs, they are also ribs that have never been seen. When Takaie hears her witticism, he states that he is going to tell others that it was he who made such a retort. For a man in a powerful position at court to show his jealousy over a woman's intelligence portrays how brilliant she really was. In a similar case, Aid of Ceremonials Nobutsune has come to visit Empress Teishi. When he doesn't sit on the cushion that has been laid out for him, she asks who else he brought with him, implying that that person would be sitting on the open cushion. He responds, “‘If I sit on the cushion after coming through this rain, I'll leave horrible dirty footprints on it,' he replied. 'Oh well,' I said, 'let's say it's your footman then’” (McKinney 105). Here we see a pun on footman, as in a person's retainer, and footman, being a man that he would have created on the cushion with the tracks of mud. He then repeatedly exclaims that Shonagon couldn't possibly have made such a witty retort without

his previous comment, and he is consequently due the respect for giving such a response.

Through this story, as well, she is shown to be quicker in wit than a man.

Depictions of Romance

Despite subverting femininity, by illustrating to the reader her extraordinary level of intelligence and her discerning personality, Shonagon is able to prove to the reader that she is trustworthy in making judgments about a situation. In this way, she is able to express presumptions about relationships, romance, and femininity. Sarra states that Shonagon is:

Presenting an image of its author-narrator as antiheroine, a woman defined in terms of her defiance of convention. The other, more compelling face her text displays is that of virtuoso, a woman who knows the codes so well she can run circles around everyone else, while she herself remains outside the game (and the text) as its mistress of ceremonies: hers is the only dry sleeve in Heian Japan (Sarra 259).

Despite her dislike for the cliché, Shonagon shows her sensibility towards romance in her list entitled “Things that Make Your Heart Beat Faster.” This list not only has a sense of romance to it, but it carries the sense of the unexpected as well. She lists, “Lighting some fine incense and then lying down alone to sleep . . . To wash your hair, apply your makeup and put on clothes that are well-scented with incense. Even if you're somewhere where no one special will see you, you still feel a heady sense of pleasure inside. On a night when you're waiting for someone to come, there's a sudden gust of rain and something rattles in the wind, making your heart suddenly beat faster” (McKinney 30). Lighting incense was usually done for romantic liaisons, and thus doing so would be expected to make one's heart beat faster. However, she follows it up with “lying down alone,” the exact opposite of what one would expect in this situation. This parallels the next statement concerning making oneself beautiful even if no one will see you. She is taking in

the fact that even if no one is expected to come, if someone makes themselves beautiful, surely a visitor will come simply because she put on her makeup and scented herself. The last portion mentions a night where a woman is waiting for her lover. She is probably listening closely for any whisper that would foretell his arrival, when suddenly she is startled by the sound of rain. While closely listening for her lover, she could not anticipate the loud noise of the rain, which startles her heart into beating quickly. As well, the rain would decrease the likelihood of her lover coming to visit and thus would be a disappointment. Shonagon is able to show her understanding of the romance of anticipation, as well as contrasting each situation with a flair for the unanticipated.

Another depiction of romance can be seen when Tadanobu comes to visit. She admires him, writing:

The way he seated himself on the narrow veranda, with one foot hanging from its edge as he leaned in slightly towards the blind, made him look the absolute epitome of some splendid figure in a picture, or in the sort of marvelous scene you find described in a romance...It would have been rather more impressive, however, if the lady inside the screen making her replies to the gentleman beyond had been a young girl, her hair beautifully smooth and flowing luxuriantly down all about her, the way they describe in the tales (McKinney 71).

Shonagon describes the scene as one that could be found in a romance or in tales. In this way she proves her knowledge of such things, and shows that romantic expectations come from tales. She depicts the perfect lady who would be sitting behind the scene in such a romance. She then contrasts this image of the perfect lady with the image of herself, an ageing woman with frizzy hair in simple robes. She knows that she is not the perfect lady from the romances, but that she is at least able to discern what would be perfection. Having proven her intelligence and romantic knowledge to the reader time and again, Shonagon purveys her own romantic ideas.

She elucidates, “It's delightful to see someone who's a great ladies' man, and is pursuing numerous love affairs, arriving home at dawn from who knows what night-time tryst. Sleepy through you can see he feels, he nevertheless sits down and draws the inkstone up to write his next-morning letter to her . . . not merely dashing off whatever springs to mind but putting himself heart and soul into what he writes” (McKinney 176). She once again illuminates an unexpected situation. A man who is a ladies' man would be expected to be uncaring since he is pursuing many love affairs. He could potentially feel that since he has so many lovers, sending a next-morning letter every time would be too troublesome. However, the man painstakingly writes the letter and takes great care when sending it off to her. Shonagon is once again able to portray relationship norms through the unexpected.

The point of this passage is furthered when Shonagon tells the tale of a couple who have had an argument. She proclaims the husband as one who always writes a next-morning letter. She is giving the reader a clue into his personality. Writing a next-morning letter was expected and romantic, so obviously this man cares about his wife. After their argument, a letter does not arrive, and the following day it begins to rain. Since her lover did not even write her a letter on the previous sunny day, she cannot expect him to come visit when it is raining outside. Despite this, “a messenger with an umbrella appears with a letter for you. With more haste than usual, you open it, to find there only the words 'the rising floods of rain' – this gives you much more delight than would whole pages full of poems” (McKinney 236). Just when she had no hope of news from her lover due to the weather, she is able to receive a letter from him. Opening the letter she may have expected a long poem explaining his feelings, or possibly an apology. Instead, in just a few words, he is able to sum up his feelings for her as being like the “rising

floods of rain,” as well as assure his return. This simple statement proves his love for her by making poetic allusion and weather-appropriate reference thus showing his poetic prowess. Then, another woman receives a letter, “a formal letter on very white paper, Michinoku or perhaps decorated paper . . . The ink varies from rich black to pale, the lines are closely spaced and the writing sprawls over two sides of the page . . . since she's seated at some distance from you, all you can do is guess at the meaning of the parts where the ink is blackest” (McKinney 236). The woman is enthralled by the letter because he wrote all that he could fit onto the page, and even the woman sitting farther away can tell the lover's feelings through the blackness of the ink. Despite Shonagon's appreciation for the short letter making keen poetic allusions, she also portrays her appreciation for the man who puts much thought and time into writing a letter so long and passionate.

By formulating these short fictional scenarios, Shonagon portrays the romanticism of relationships. She is also able to depict how romanticism relates to the unexpected. If someone is expecting the romantic and it happens, it is great, but if someone expects nothing and something wonderfully romantic happens contrary to expectation, that is the essence of romanticism.

Sei Shonagon portrays herself as a woman who uses her enormous intelligence to validate herself, and flaunts her knowledge to impress others. Through the direct nature in which she portrays herself to others, not hiding behind rhetoric as many other women do, she can be seen as the antithesis to feminine norms. Shonagon is the woman who can win battles of wit against men, and constantly makes apparent her knowledge of Chinese. By viewing Sei Shonagon's antithetical mannerisms, one can gain a greater understanding of the expectations for

aristocratic women's behavior, assumptions about romance, and perceptions of relationships. Due to her actions being contrary to the feminine norm, ideas of normalcy for both relationships and femininity can be gleaned from *Makura no soshi*.

A Life in Fear of Other's Opinions:

Murasaki Shikibu nikki

Murasaki Shikibu was a woman of the provincial governor class who served under Empress Shoshi, the mistress of the rival salon to which Sei Shonagon was employed. *Murasaki Shikibu nikki* chronicles two years of the author's life in the service of Empress Shoshi, starting from the birth of Shoshi's son, Prince Atsuhira. It is estimated that she had written a small portion of her famous fictive romance narrative, *The Tale of Genji*, before beginning composition of her *nikki* in her late thirties to early forties. *Murasaki Shikibu nikki* portrays a woman who, through her fear of being viewed as an outsider herself, extorts her derision of those deemed socially inappropriate in order to place herself within the social circle. This is in spite of the author's desire to be able to show her true self to those at court. Through Shikibu's successful bids to remain within the social circle, the reader is able to discern what was considered socially appropriate.

Murasaki Shikibu nikki has three distinct parts, the first of which is a chronicle of the birth of Prince Atsuhira. The second portion, which starts at passage 54, contains harsh criticisms and praises of those at court. The third section begins after passage 74, with an address to the reader, and then returns to chronicling events concerning Empress Shoshi. Concerning the first two sections, the translator Richard Bowring notes, "The fact that Murasaki is using old paper raises the interesting possibility that this 'letter' section may have actually been

written on the back of the earlier record part that stopped at section 54” (Bowring 140).

According to Bowring's theory, the first two parts of the *nikki* may have been composed separately, and for different audiences. Murasaki Shikibu mentions her use of old paper in her address to the audience:

I want to reveal all to you, the good and the bad, worldly matters and private sorrows, things I cannot really go on discussing in this letter, but, no matter how objectionable the person one is describing, perhaps one should never tell all...Mind you, if this letter ever got into the wrong hands even for a moment it would be a disaster, but there is so much more I want to tell you . . . I feel I should not use new paper so I'm afraid this will look very shabby, but I am not trying to be rude; I have my reasons . . . So you see— I still fret over what others think of me” (Bowring 141).

This position on the separate composition of the sections posed by Bowring, and the style in which each section was written leads one to believe that while the first and third sections, covering events involving the emperor and empress, were imperially commissioned, the middle section was not. Stating her worries in this passage suggests a personal tone that would not have been used for a work commissioned by Empress Shoshi. In this passage, Shikibu agonizes over what others will think of her every action, including the writing of her *nikki*. Were those who are close to her to find out about the derisive actions that she has taken and the scrutinizing things that she has said about them, she could be ostracized by those in her salon. Thus, she worries over what people will think upon reading her *nikki*. Shikibu's purpose for writing is very much like that of someone writing a diary, only with a particular reader in mind. She shows that she intended to leave nothing out, but her fear of having her work read by others has led her to doing so. She makes an outright statement of her fear of others' opinions. Despite giving such harsh opinions herself, she is fearful of having these opinions reflected back upon her. Edith Sarra in the chapter entitled “The Poetics of Voyeurism” in her book *Fictions of Femininity*, explains,

“And when a woman (and particularly the narrator) exercises the gaze, it is she herself (or another more or less marginalized woman like her) at whom she is most likely to look” (Sarra 228). First, this statement expresses that a woman is most likely to be analytical of herself. Second, it shows that a woman judges others based on the same standards with which she expects to be judged herself. This fear of what others think, and the harsh judgments given in the *nikki* are what allow the reader to glean what was considered socially appropriate behavior.

Shikibu is an author who concerns herself with remaining within the societal norm. Were both Sei Shonagon and Murasaki Shikibu characters in the same novel, we would want to consider them dramatic foils of one another. Despite the contrast of Shonagon's subversion of femininity and Shikibu's fear of unintentionally stepping outside the boundary of societal expectation, one cannot help but see certain similarities between the two women. Both women are incredibly discerning, and both portray court life through descriptions rich in the splendor of the time. They go into deep description of their lush surroundings, and the elaborate fashion of the time, and are careful to mention those that do not live up to their standards. Fukumori notes that, “Murasaki Shikibu is the modest apologist for her unseemly, inappropriate knowledge, while Sei Shonagon is the exuberant exhibitionist of a prized skill” (Fukumori 105). While Shonagon shows that she is not afraid to leave anything out because she knows how to successfully skirt the boundaries of femininity, Shikibu hides things about herself in order to coincide with the expectations placed upon women by society. Shikibu takes action in order to fit in with the other ladies-in-waiting by joining them in deriding those that fall outside of the norm.

Conformity

Shikibu sees the beauty in things that seem to completely fit into a standard while covertly maintaining their own individuality. These are things that can be described as *imamekashi* or modish. While Shikibu recognizes the beauty of things for their ability to fit a standard, she revels in the nuances that show their individuality, thus making them new, modern, *imamekashi*. Like the objects she so adores, the author knows that she has individual facets to her personality that are not quite standard, and she tries to conform to those around her. In this way, she forces herself to fit in with society's norms.

The idea of “things that seemingly fit in” having beauty applies both to people as well as objects. Clothing for aristocrats during the Heian period was differentiated based upon rank. The closer to the Emperor one's rank became, the more formal the clothing one was allowed to wear. As well, certain royal colors were only afforded to those of the highest rank. This differentiation in clothing based on rank allowed for Shikibu to be able to recognize the beauty in things that were differentiated. Thus the ranking system contributed to her fondness for the *imamekashi*, the things that are modish due to their differentiation not just when comparing people based on rank, but when viewing people on an individual level as well. During the ceremony of cutting the umbilical cord right after Prince Atsuhira's birth, Shikibu describes the apparel of the women participating in the event. She writes, “They were all wearing gauze mantles, with trains and jackets of taffeta, and had their hair done up with hairpins and white ribbon; it looked most attractive...Lady Koshosho's train was decorated with autumn grasses, butterflies, and birds sketched in glittering silver. No one was free to do exactly as they pleased . . . so she had obviously tried something unusual at the waistline” (Bowring 61). Shikibu describes the beauty in all of the women's seeming conformity. However, when she mentions

these women as being attractive, she does not mention any particular individuals who looked especially attractive, until she notices the individual touches they placed on their garments. She then mentions how Lady Koshosho's embroidered train stood out. This shows her enjoyment in the small measure of individuality that can be seen amongst the conformity. Her statement that it is “unusual” shows her regard for it.

In several other cases she mentions an item being unusual and expresses a fondness for it. For example, “I also noticed some unusually decorated fans that looked very special” (Bowring 79). Things that are unusual to her are things that have a special touch to them. These things and people all fit in to a standard, yet this special touch allows them to stand out, rendering them *imamekashi*. This love for such things can be seen again during the first celebration of the birth. When objects are being presented to Empress Shoshi at the celebration, Shikibu describes them, “the lining in the clothes chests, wraps for the clothing itself, the covers for the chests, and the stand with its cover – was of the same white material and design, and yet they had taken care to leave some trace of originality” (Bowring 63). She expresses the appeal of having objects of similar design. However she truly appreciates the fact that each object maintained its originality. She portrays her enjoyment in the small amount of individuality that was afforded the items, while they were still able to match each other. She again uses this viewpoint when describing women's dress:

In the normal run of things you can always tell when someone is less than careful about their appearance, but on this occasion everyone had done their utmost to make the best of themselves. It looked just like a scene from a beautiful scroll. The only difference you could tell was between the older women and the younger ones . . . Yet strangely enough it seemed that just one glance at that part of their face which showed above the fans sufficed to tell whether or not a person was truly elegant; those who still stood out among such women were indeed exceptional” (Bowring 81).

Despite these women all looking similar and perfectly elegant, Shikibu decides that it is those who, for their minute differences, could be noticed above the others that are truly remarkable. The ability of a person or object to manifest individualism amongst the conformity is what impresses Shikibu.

One must wonder why she views things in this way. Shikibu is a person faced with the constraints of society on a daily basis. As will be later addressed, she spends her time concerned over remaining within the norm, while wishing that she did not have to do so. Her consternation towards those who do not realize individuality is apparent. On the third day after the birth, a ceremony with dancers takes place. Afterward, the young nobles discuss the dancers amongst themselves, saying, “Did you notice the decoration on the edges and tops of each blind is different for each room? You can tell the women apart from the way they do their hair and the way they sit. None of them are quite identical!” Shikibu comments, “I found it rather distasteful” (Bowring 105). Her distaste arises from the nobles' statement, which shows that up until this point they did not recognize the possibility of women's individuality. This upsets her because society has placed her within a set of norms that she must abide by, and by consenting to the pressures of society, she loses that sense of individuality. And later we will see that Shikibu longs to break free of these constraints. On account of this, the author expresses a large amount of envy as well as an appreciation for any person or object who is able to fit into society's constraints while maintaining a refined originality. Since she envies those with originality who are not treated harshly by society, she shows jealousy and scorn towards those who are able to skirt societal norms.

Breaking the Bonds of Concealment

Despite being a woman who rigorously abides by the rules of society, Shikibu wishes that she did not have to do so. Her desire to show her true personality, and her jealousy over those who do so, is apparent. Right before her message directed to the reader in passage 73, she writes, “Now I shall be absolutely frank. I care little for what others say . . . It may seem that I am merely going through the emotions of being a true believer, but I assure you that I can think of little else at the present moment” (Bowring 141). Passage 74 then contains the aforementioned address to the reader, “if this letter ever got into the wrong hands even for a moment it would be a disaster . . . So you see—I still fret over what others think of me, and if I had to sum up my position now I would have to admit I still retain a strong sense of attachment for this world” (Bowring 141). Why the conflicting statements, one might wonder. Passage 72 can be seen as expressing one of her desires, while passage 73 portrays the reality of her response to societal pressure. Just as Shikibu desires to be released from her connections in the world by taking the tonsure, she also desires to be impervious to others' opinions. She wishes to act as herself and not be bound by the everyday struggle to make sure her actions are acceptable.

She again states her desire to not have to hide her true personality in the first section of the book when describing the third day of the dances for the emperor. After seeing a little girl throw her fan to the Secretaries of Sixth Rank, she is astounded by the girl's brash actions. Despite Shikibu considering the girl's behavior highly inappropriate, her actions inspire Shikibu's rebellious thoughts. She states, “‘From now on, I told myself, I shall become inured to shamefulness and find it no great hardship to show myself openly to others.’ My future rose up before me like a dream and I began to fantasize, so much so that I became uneasy and could not watch the ceremony as I was wont” (Bowring 107). Shikibu dreams of being open with

who she is, but even the dream of such a thing makes her feel uneasy, and she realizes that she could never actually do so in real life. Thus she uses her writing to depict who she truly is.

Notwithstanding, portrayals of jealousy towards those who can openly express themselves are seen within the second section of the *nikki*. In this section, Shikibu expresses her resentment for Sei Shonagon, in a way that can be interpreted as jealousy towards her. “She thought herself so clever, and littered her writings with Chinese characters, but if you examined them closely, they left a great deal to be desired” (Bowring 131). Shikibu, who herself had been sneered at for her open study of the Chinese classics as a child, and who now has to hide her study of Chinese with Empress Shoshi, shows her anger towards Shonagon, whose blatant use of Chinese in her writing and employment of her knowledge of Chinese gains the attention of others. She expresses her fear that others would discover hers and Empress Shoshi’s studies of Chinese, writing, “and, because she evinced a desire to know about such things, we carefully chose a time when other women would not be present . . . I hid this fact from others, as did Her Majesty” (Bowring 139). While the Empress’s desire to learn Chinese proves its appropriateness, the exposure of such knowledge was inappropriate. Flaunting her knowledge was considered improper because only high-ranking people and men within the aristocratic system were supposed to know Chinese. Naomi Fukumori’s article, “Chinese Learning as Performative Power” serves to prove such a point. She explains, “Chinese is posited as a privileged body of knowledge that isolates a woman from others of her gender and status, and elevates her discursively to a level of equal footing with the highest ranking” (Fukumori 110). Thus, broadcasting such knowledge when one is neither male nor high-ranking portrays oneself as conceited. Shonagon’s blatancy in the exhibition of her knowledge is what upsets Shikibu.

Shikibu as protagonist portrays this agitation, positing upon the reader the idea of her salon's superior refinement.

Disguising One's Self

Disguising one's true self and one's knowledge to conform to society's standards becomes a major theme throughout the second portion of *Murasaki Shikibu nikki*. Shikibu states, “So aware am I of my women's prying eyes that I hesitate to do even those things a woman in my position should allow herself to do. How much more so at court, where I do have many things I wish to say but always think better of it...So I seem to be misunderstood, and they think that I am shy” (Bowring 135). She portrays herself as someone so discerning that not only society's judgment, but her own judgment as well, keeps her from interacting with others. John Wallace states that she “at times thinks of herself as an outsider— not to the degree of the other memoirists but enough to acquire a perspective on the many relationships and activities she observes.” (Wallace 152). This fear of making a mistake in the eyes of others leads her to conceal herself and her knowledge to all but a limited few. Sarra comments that *The Tale of Genji* involves scenes of male voyeurism in which the man views the woman in a stereotypical *kaimami* (peeping through the fence) scene. On the other hand, in *Makura no soshi* the roles are often reversed and it is the woman, and often the narrator, doing the viewing (Sarra 222). Analyzing *Murasaki Shikibu nikki* in a similar way, we note that the theme of a female viewing other females is prevalent. Shikibu's gaze discerns which women are the most beautiful, and analyzes their personalities. This leads to the protagonist's fear of falling short when the analytical feminine gaze is turned upon her. Despite being highly intelligent, she hides her knowledge so as not to face the reproving eyes of others. When she receives a compliment on

her intelligence, another woman dubs her “Our Lady of the Chronicles,” which insinuates that Shikibu is flaunting her Chinese learning. Shikibu expresses her outrage, “How utterly ridiculous! Would I, who hesitate to reveal my learning in front of my women at home, ever think of doing so at court?” (Bowring 139). When Shikibu's brother was younger and studying Chinese, she found it easier to grasp the subject than he. When people began commenting on this, she realized that being learned is one thing, but flaunting this knowledge was considered unacceptable. She explains, “Father, a most learned man, was always regretting the fact: 'Just my luck!' he would say. 'What a pity she was not born a man!' But then gradually I realized that people were saying, 'It's bad enough when a man flaunts his learning; she will come to no good,' and ever since then I have avoided writing even the simplest character” (Bowring 139).

Shikibu discovers that exhibiting her knowledge is considered inappropriate, and thus pretends that she is devoid of any Chinese knowledge. However, rumors circulate, and because of Empress Shoshi's desire to learn the works of Po Chu-i, a Chinese poet esteemed by Shikibu's contemporaries, she became the Empress's secret tutor. Neither Empress Shoshi, nor Shikibu divulge that they are reading Chinese together; however the Emperor somehow discovers what they are up to, and shows his approval by having new copies of Chinese books made for them. It is notable here that when one is said to be showing off her knowledge, it is viewed in a disapproving manner. On the other hand, when one is learning solely for her own sake, it is looked upon approvingly. It was not a matter of Chinese knowledge itself being inappropriate; it was the application of that knowledge to make oneself appear intelligent that was considered improper by those at court. By tutoring Empress Shoshi, Shikibu is able to further her learning, while shielding society from the truth of her intelligence and maintaining an appearance of

decorum.

In addition to fearing her knowledge of Chinese will be exposed, Shikibu also has a fear of being seen as an outsider because of her age. While she revels in the beauty and splendor of court life, she cannot help but feel left out of such grandeur since she is no longer young and beautiful. When she receives a gift of chrysanthemum-scented cloth from Empress Shoshi, she takes slight offense: “‘Her Excellency sent it especially for you 'to wipe away old age once and for all!’ I was in half a mind to send it back with the poem: Brushing my sleeve/ with chrysanthemum dew/ to gain a little youth/ I restore it to the owner/ to work its wonders” (Bowring 49). While it was a ritual to wash one's face with chrysanthemum dew-soaked cloth for the Chrysanthemum Festival to restore oneself, Shikibu's response shows her rancor. Her poem states that she will send the cloth back to the Empress, so that she can become young too, thus implying that the Empress is not so young herself. However, before sending it, Shikibu considers her audacity and decides that the sending of such a poem would be inappropriate. This portrays the difference between the hidden personality of the author, and the woman whom she actually “performs” at court. Additionally, we can tell through her response that she was slightly miffed over the Empress's gift, most likely because her age is something that concerns her, and makes her feel an outsider to court society. Shikibu's fretting over her old age is mentioned several other times within the *nikki*.

One other occurrence of note happens during the Special Festival at the Kamo Shrine. While watching the Kagura dancer, Owari no Kanetoki, Shikibu states, “Kanetoki had been superb in the role of dancer in past years, but this year he seemed very uncertain in his movements; despite the fact that he and I had nothing in common, I felt sorry for him, and it

gave me much on which to reflect” (Bowring 113). While Shikibu does not notice their commonality, her response to watching the aged dancer shows her own regret at becoming older. She sees a man, whom she has been watching dance year after year, no longer be able to dance like he did in his prime. In this man she is able to see a reflection of her current self, and this is what makes her feel sorry for him. They share the commonality of someone who is surrounded by the splendor of court but is no longer able to live up to it themselves because being aged places them on the outside, so to speak. Her recognition of the rules prescribed by society has led Shikibu as protagonist to hide who she is, hide her knowledge of Chinese, and lament the past. In this manner, Shikibu as narrator is able to depict the persona of a woman from a refined salon, proving her discernment through her knowledge of appropriateness.

Derision of Outsiders

In order to fit within court society, Shikibu joins the other ladies-in-waiting in deriding the outsiders, or those that do not always act within society's standards. These people include those who dress inappropriately, those who act inappropriately, and the aged. Shikibu is equivalently judging people by the standards with which she judges herself. Similar actions are taken in *Makura no soshi*. In “Sei Shonagon's *Makura no soshi*: A Re-visionary History,” Naomi Fukumori states, “By introducing such foreign elements—that is, figures who clearly do not fit into the inner society of the court—Sei Shonagon sets up a dynamic in which the members of Teishi's salon collectively ridicule and alienate outsiders, thereby reinstating a feeling of harmony within their own small community” (Fukumori 27). In the same manner, Shikibu points out to the reader those whom she considers outsiders. By joining in with the majority's derision of non-conformists, she is able to successfully fool others into believing that

she is within the boundaries of societal norm herself.

After the birth of Prince Atsuhira, many celebrations took place. When critiquing the other ladies' appearances at the celebrations, she picks out both those who are exceptional, and those that need more work on their appearance. She mentions, "Lady Shosho's embroidery, decorated with silver foil, was not quite up to the same standard as the others and everyone found fault with it. By Lady Shosho I mean the younger sister of Sukemitsu, Governor of Shinano, a lady of long standing in His Excellency's employ" (Bowring 67). She shows the reader that it was not only she that thought Lady Shosho's appearance was not up to par, but the other ladies thought so as well. Her agreement with the other ladies portrays that Shikibu has an excellent sense of discernment. As well, stating Lady Shosho's exact relation to others proves that the expectations for Lady Shosho would have been higher for her since she was of long standing at court. Since she cannot even live up to the "same standard as the others," the offense of her attire being improper is even worse in the ladies' minds.

Likewise, Shikibu degrades those whom act in an inappropriate manner. After a day of ritual, celebrating Prince Atsuhira's birth, the ladies-in-waiting relax. During this time Chikuzen no Myobu makes an inauspicious statement:

'I remember,' said Chikuzen no myobu, 'when the Empress Dowager was alive there were so many imperial visits to the mansion. Ah, such times we had!' and she broke into reminiscences. Fearing this was hardly a propitious way to behave in the circumstances, the others avoided making any response and removed themselves to the other side of the dais. She did look as though, given the slightest encouragement, she would have burst into tears (Bowring 83).

Chikuzen no Myobu's mention of a previous Empress during the celebration may have boded ill for the new prince. Since she is reminiscing about the past, she brings up an empress who is now dead. Any mention in relation to death was generally considered inauspicious. As well,

mentioning the greatness of a previous empress draws the attention away from the new prince, thus causing her deeds to outshine the excitement of the event. Since Chikuzen no Myobu makes such an inappropriate remark, the other ladies immediately ostracize her. They do not want to be a part of anything that could confer poor luck. After the dances for the Emperor, one girl acts inappropriately. “As the Secretaries of Sixth Rank came forward to take the fans, one attendant, the most attractive, took it into her head to throw hers to them. Considering the way she gave herself airs, it was hardly a very ladylike thing to do” (Bowring 107). Shikibu scoffs at the young girl's actions because “she gave herself airs.” As this was also the reason for Shikibu's Chinese learning being inappropriate, it can be seen that having a humble nature was prized. However, with Shikibu's desire to become free from society's constraints, she makes this girl her inspiration to becoming “inured to shamefulness.”

Lastly, disdain was shown towards older people. In the most prominent example of such instances, prejudice is revealed when Lady Sakyo returns to court after an absence. The ladies-in-waiting and some of the young nobles decide to send her a box of objects that young women would have, in order to remind her of her age:

Fancy someone who used to lord it in the palace returning in such a manner! She must be trying to remain incognito. We must disillusion her!' . . . With this in mind they chose from the many fans in Her Majesty's possession one with a colored painting of Mt. Horai. It was undoubtedly some sly reference. I doubt whether she understood it . . . 'She's not as young as she used to be, you know! Don't you think the comb is a bit too straight?' said the younger nobles, bending it even more so that the ends nearly met in a dreadfully up-to-date fashion (Bowring 110).

Since most women enter the court at a young age, the box serves to ask Lady Sakyo what such an old lady is doing at court. Their cruel message portrays their feelings that since Lady Sakyo is older, she is an outsider to them.

Additionally, a statement is made about a woman by the name of Miyagi no Jiju. Shikibu writes, “[she was] the kind of person you wished would always remain a little girl, but she let herself age and became a nun; we heard no more of her” (Bowring 121). Shikibu speaks fondly of the beautiful girl she remembers from the past. However her statement that “she let herself age” shows a repulsion toward those who are older, as if there is a choice between ageing or not. In *Writing a Woman's Life*, Carolyn Heilbrun states, “the sense of conforming to the ideals of attractive womanhood is one that sustains many women in our culture as they grow older. To ‘let oneself go’ is to resign one's sense of oneself as a woman and therefore, in many cases, as a person” (Heilbrun 54). Ageing was seen as “letting oneself go” and led to a woman no longer being able to produce children. A woman who no longer is able to bear children being at court was inappropriate because a woman’s value to potential lovers was measured through her ability to produce children. Without being able to bear children, the likelihood of gaining favor was very slim.

Murasaki Shikibu's derision of those who fall outside of society's norms, in combination with hiding her knowledge and personality, renders her acceptable when viewed from the eyes of society. In the way that a middle school child will bully others in order to keep from being bullied himself, Murasaki Shikibu disparages the outsiders around her so as not to be viewed as abnormal. Furthermore, in her ridicule of others for their distasteful actions, the reader can observe her impressive knowledge of what is and is not acceptable from society's standpoint. Being a woman who is afraid to act improperly to the point of sometimes not speaking at all, and pretending to know nothing of Chinese characters, her incredibly harsh judgment of every situation proves her knowledge. Knowing that she is an overly discerning woman, statements

about the character and dress of a proper woman can be believed as true. Statements like, “Whenever someone approaches you and you wish to reply with a quick poem . . . One should take care to give an appropriate response. When people say that true character is a rare commodity, it is this kind of flexibility that they are talking about,” reveal Shikibu's discernment (Bowring 129). She believes that someone with “true character” is a person who is truly adaptable and can react correctly to any situation. As well, she states “The key to everything is to be pleasant, gentle, properly relaxed, and self-possessed; this is what makes for charm and composure in a woman...as long as you are well-meaning at heart and refrain from anything that might cause embarrassment to others, you will be forgiven” (Bowring 137). Through countless statements such as this, the reader can determine what was appropriate and what conformed to society's standards.

Murasaki Shikibu was a woman of superior intelligence who, because of her age and upbringing could be considered an outsider at court. Her knowledge of Chinese brought her some amount of ridicule to which she responded by hiding knowledge of even the smallest amount of Chinese. In order to seemingly fit in with the other ladies-in-waiting, she repeatedly hides her knowledge and joins them in the derision of others who would be considered outsiders through their looks or behavior.

Concluding Remarks

In *Kagero nikki*, Michitsuna no haha, as narrator, writes to disenchant women from traditional tales of romance. With few people left whom she can rely on, the protagonist acts in order to maintain her husband's affections. Through indirect forms of coercion, the protagonist uses conventions of femininity in order to make attempts at manipulating her husband for years.

When she feels that their relationship is going to come to an end once and for all, she makes a desperate attempt in order to reconcile the relationship, which would either end in her taking the tonsure or her being looked upon as a fool despite successfully saving her relationship. Her direct bid for Kaneie's attentions ultimately results in the latter. At the end of the *nikki*, Michitsuna no haha reaches the point beyond her childbearing years, thus leaving behind her feminine place in the world. She finds peace in no longer having to fret over her place in Kaneie's affections, as she knows he will continue to return in order to look after her son and adopted daughter, and finds solace in watching over Michitsuna's romantic endeavors.

Sei Shonagon's *Makura no soshi* portrays a woman who establishes her contrarian way of thinking through successful subversions of femininity and a delight in the unexpected. She is the epitome of what Edith Sarra calls the “direct” and “unrhetorical.” Shonagon directly flaunts her knowledge in order to show her intelligence and prove value in her Empress's salon. Her intelligence and wit are compared to that of regents and other high ranking courtiers, showing that she was truly one who can be counted among the great women of the time, in addition to painting a portrait of the salon of an empress who only surrounds herself with witty, discerning women.

Murasaki Shikibu, who is driven by her fear of being portrayed as an outsider to the feminine world through her age and knowledge of Chinese, secretly longs to be the direct, assertive sort of woman that Sei Shonagon portrays. Her fear of derision keeps her from being able to portray her true self— an intelligent, overly discerning woman. Thus, the other ladies-in-waiting find her boring and shy. Through her fear, she decides to blend in with the other ladies by deriding those who act as though they are or appear to be skirting the boundaries of feminine

society.

Through the reading of these three works, *Kagero nikki*, *Makura no soshi*, and *Murasaki Shikibu nikki*, the reader can find commonalities between the protagonists. These three women share a concern with how they will portray themselves to their reader. Additionally, all three women either subvert femininity, or use it to their advantage in realizing their goals. The ways in which they do this can be categorized as the overt and the indirect, the latter being a more subtle, feminine way of going about things. In *Kagero nikki*, *Makura no soshi*, and *Murasaki Shikibu nikki*, all three authors concern themselves with ways in which to portray their femininity through direct or indirect methods in order to obtain their various aspirations.

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